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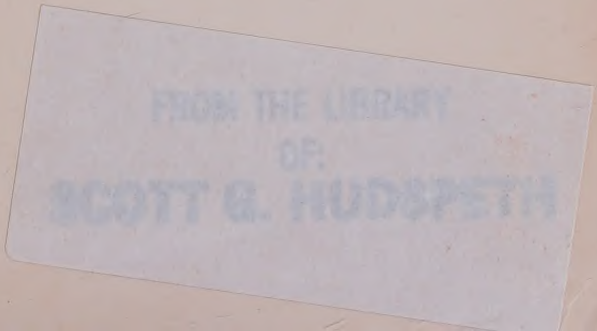

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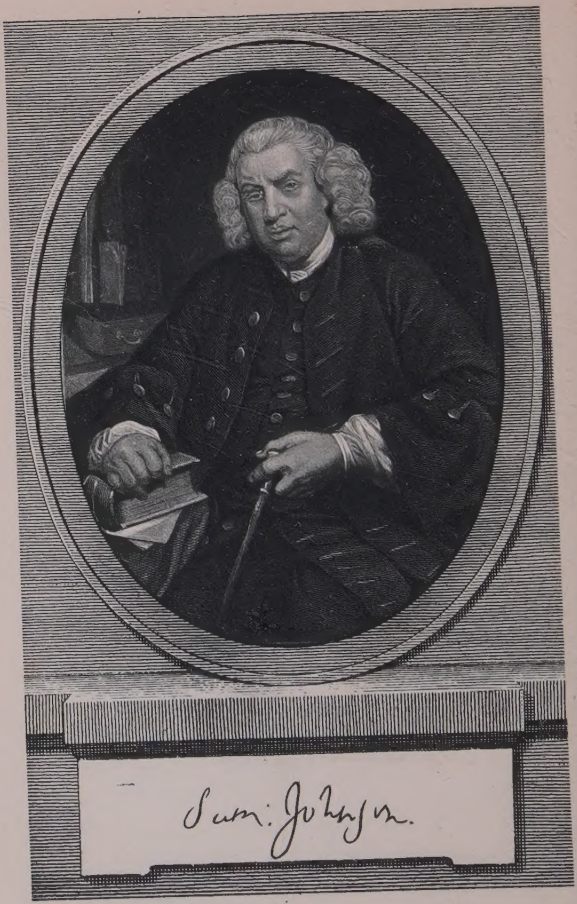
Sam: Johnson.

Little Masterpieces

Edited by Bliss Perry

SAMUEL JOHNSON

ESSAYS FROM

The Rambler and The Idler

With Passages from

The Lives of the Poets

Prayers and Meditations

and Other Writings

GEORGE MARK ELLIOTT LIBRARY
The Cincinnati Bible Seminary

NEW YORK

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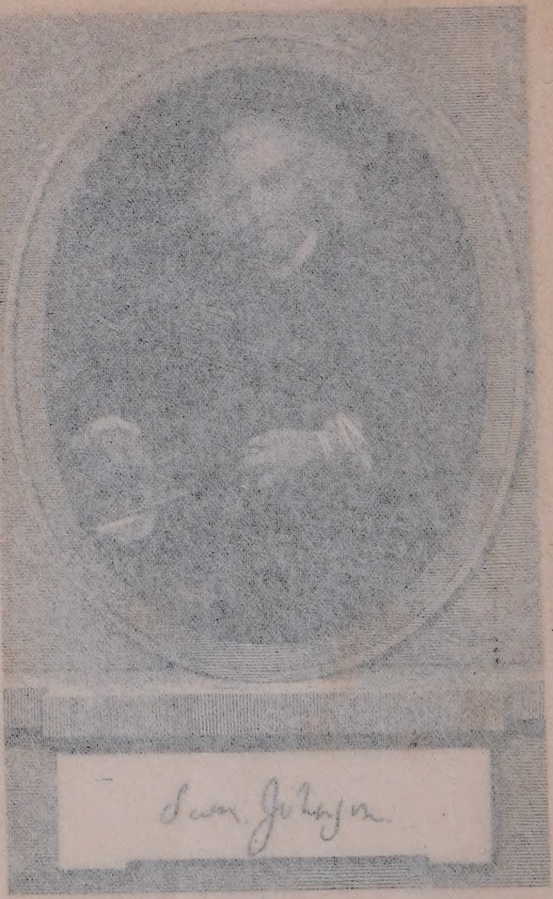
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Editor's Introduction

Editor's Introduction.

Edmund Burke, who knew Samuel Johnson well, remarked that "Boswell's Life is a greater monument to Johnson's fame than all his writings put together." It was a shrewd forecast of the verdict of posterity. Yet Johnson the talker, as pictured in the most fascinating of English biographies, should not and surely does not wholly overshadow the figure of Johnson the writer. It was as an author that "brave old Samuel" won the right to be reverenced as the literary arbiter of his generation. Though time and fashion have dealt rudely with many of the pages in his six stout volumes, there are plenty of pages left which will give pleasure and instruction as long as sincerity of feeling and wise understanding of the art of life and athletic mastery of the English tongue are considered admirable qualities. If Boswell's Life has drawn modern readers away from Johnson's writings to listen to his inimitable table-talk, it must also be remembered that the Life is constantly training readers to appreciate Samuel Johnson's unique individuality. Once understood, the sterling traits of his individuality are recog-

nizable throughout the wide range of his productiveness in the field of letters.

That vigorous personality is stamped upon the essays of "The Rambler" and "The Idler." It is by these essays, two or three poems, and the tale of "Rasselas," that Johnson earned the literary reputation that gave authority to his Dictionary. The essays are sometimes wordy and colorless, and overweighted with prosy sermonizings. Yet "the great moralist" trudges sturdily along through platitudes and piosities, and manages to make you feel that it is worth while to accompany him. The readers of this little volume, indeed, are not called upon to make very protracted efforts; for the papers from "The Rambler" and "The Idler" that are given here either deal with themes of perennial interest, or depict, with a graphic power which compels attention, the fortunes of books and the authors of books a century and a half ago.

There is writing of a more masterly order, however, in the passages chosen to illustrate the spirit and aim with which Johnson undertook his English Dictionary. There are few pages in our literature more noble than those which sketch the plan of the great work, and the concluding paragraphs of the Preface. Between these two selections, I have printed, in its proper chronological place, the famous letter to Lord Chesterfield,

a letter unmatched for pride, indignation, and pathos.

Some of the most varied and lively compositions of Dr. Johnson are to be found in his Lives of the Poets, volumes now too seldom read. They do not lend themselves, except in isolated portions, to the purposes of a book like this. I have chosen three characteristic passages from the Life of Milton,—whose character Johnson evidently respected rather than loved,—an account of Addison as a critic, and that comparison of Pope with Dryden which used to adorn school reading-books of the edifying old-fashioned sort, and still deserves a better fate than oblivion.

Few people, I believe, except consistent Johnsonians, are aware of the extraordinary interest attaching to the "Prayers and Meditations" which Johnson wrote out for his own use, and which were printed after his death by the Rev. George Strahan. Nowhere, not even upon the most vivid pages of Boswell, is the essential character of this strange and very great man so completely revealed as in these fragments of autobiography. It is not merely his deep religious nature, the terrors of death, the trembling hope of pardon, the contrition for wasted time, the sacred memories of "poor Tetty" and his mother, that are here displayed. Here also are his annual resolutions in all their touching simplicity, their unconscious

humor. "To rise at six"—"to rise not later than six, if I can"—"to rise at eight"—"to rise at eight and *by degrees* at six"—what human nature there is in this! I can imagine lovers of Boswell's Life laying down "The Rambler" and "The Idler" with a dissatisfaction which they would scarcely wish to own. But in the "Prayers and Meditations" they will rediscover the Johnson they know, and they will know him all the better for this glimpse of a brave and loving man upon his knees.

BLISS PERRY.

The Rambler

The Rambler.

DIFFICULTY OF THE FIRST ADDRESS.

No. 1. Tuesday, March 20, 1749--50.

Cur tamen hoc libeat potius decurrere campo,
Per quem magnus equos Auruncæ flexit alumnus,
Si vacat, et placidi rationem admittitis, edam.—Juv.

Why to expatiate in this beaten field,
Why arms, oft us'd in vain, I mean to wield;
If time permit, and candour will attend,
Some satisfaction this essay may lend.
Elphinston.

The difficulty of the first address on any new occasion, is felt by every man in his transactions with the world, and confessed by the settled and regular forms of salutation which necessity has introduced into all languages. Judgment was wearied with the perplexity of being forced upon choice, where there was no motive to preference; and it was found convenient that some easy method of introduction should be established, which, if it wanted the allurement of novelty, might enjoy the security of prescription.

Perhaps few authors have presented themselves before the publick, without wishing that such ceremonial modes of entrance had

been anciently established, as might have freed them from those dangers which the desire of pleasing is certain to produce, and precluded the vain expedients of softening censure by apologies, or rousing attention by abruptness.

The epick writers have found the proemial part of the poem such an addition to their undertaking, that they have almost unanimously adopted the first lines of Homer, and the reader needs only be informed of the subject, to know in what manner the poem will begin.

But this solemn repetition is hitherto the peculiar distinction of heroick poetry; it has never been legally extended to the lower orders of literature, but seems to be considered as an hereditary privilege, to be enjoyed only by those who claim it from their alliance to the genius of Homer.

The rules which the injudicious use of this prerogative suggested to Horace, may indeed be applied to the direction of candidates for inferior fame; it may be proper for all to remember, that they ought not to raise expectations which it is not in their power to satisfy, and that it is more pleasing to see smoke brightening into flame, than flame sinking into smoke.

This precept has been long received, both from regard to the authority of Horace, and its conformity to the general opinion of the

world; yet there have been always some, that thought it no deviation from modesty to recommend their own labours, and imagined themselves entitled by indisputable merit to an exemption from general restraints, and to elevations not allowed in common life. They, perhaps, believed, that when, like Thucydides, they bequeathed to mankind κτῆμα ἐς ἀεί, *an estate for ever*, it was an additional favour to inform them of its value.

It may, indeed, be no less dangerous to claim, on certain occasions, too little than too much. There is something captivating in spirit and intrepidity, to which we often yield, as to a resistless power; nor can he reasonably expect the confidence of others, who too apparently distrusts himself.

Plutarch, in his enumeration of the various occasions on which a man may without just offence proclaim his own excellencies, has omitted the case of an authour entering the world; unless it may be comprehended under his general position, that a man may lawfully praise himself for those qualities which cannot be known but from his own mouth; as when he is among strangers, and can have no opportunity of an actual exertion of his powers. That the case of an authour is parallel will scarcely be granted, because he necessarily discovers the degree of his merit to his judges, when he appears at his trial.

But it should be remembered, that unless his judges are inclined to favour him, they will hardly be persuaded to hear the cause.

In love, the state which fills the heart with a degree of solicitude next that of an authour, it has been held a maxim, that success is most easily obtained by indirect and unperceived approaches; he who too soon professes himself a lover, raises obstacles to his own wishes, and those whom disappointments have taught experience, endeavour to conceal their passion till they believe their mistress wishes for the discovery. The same method, if it were practicable to writers, would save many complaints of the severity of the age, and the caprices of criticism. If a man could glide imperceptibly into the favour of the publick, and only proclaim his pretensions to literary honours when he is sure of not being rejected, he might commence authour with better hopes, as his failings might escape contempt, though he shall never attain much regard.

But since the world supposes every man that writes, ambitious of applause, as some ladies have taught themselves to believe that every man intends love, who expresses civility, the miscarriage of any endeavour in learning raises an unbounded contempt, indulged by most minds without scruple, as an honest triumph over unjust claims, and exorbitant expectations. The artifices of those

who put themselves in this hazardous state, have therefore been multiplied in proportion to their fear as well as their ambition; and are to be looked upon with more indulgence, as they are incited at once by the two great movers of the human mind, the desire of good, and the fear of evil. For who can wonder that, allured on one side, and frightened on the other, some should endeavour to gain favour by bribing the judge with an appearance of respect which they do not feel, to excite compassion by confessing weakness of which they are not convinced; and others to attract regard by a shew of openness and magnanimity, by a daring profession of their own deserts, and a publick challenge of honours and rewards?

The ostentatious and haughty display of themselves has been the usual refuge of diurnal writers, in vindication of whose practice it may be said, that what it wants in prudence is supplied by sincerity, and who at least may plead, that if their boasts deceive any into the perusal of their performances, they defraud them of but little time.

Quid enim? Concurritur—horæ
Momento cita mors venit, aut victoria læta.

The battle join, and in a moment's flight,
Death, or a joyful conquest, ends the fight.
FRANCIS.

The question concerning the merit of the day

is soon decided, and we are not condemned to toil through half a folio, to be convinced that the writer has broke his promise.

It is one among many reasons for which I purpose to endeavour the entertainment of my countrymen by a short essay on Tuesday and Saturday, that I hope not much to tire those whom I shall not happen to please; and if I am not commended for the beauty of my works, to be at least pardoned for their brevity. But whether my expectations are most fixed on pardon or praise, I think it not necessary to discover; for having accurately weighed the reasons for arrogance and submission, I find them so nearly equiponderant, that my impatience to try the event of my first performance will not suffer me to attend any longer the trepidations of the balance.

There are, indeed, many conveniences almost peculiar to this method of publication, which may naturally flatter the authour, whether he be confident or timorous. The man to whom the extent of his knowledge, or the sprightliness of his imagination, has, in his own opinion, already secured the praises of the world, willingly takes that way of displaying his abilities which will soonest give him an opportunity of hearing the voice of fame; it heightens his alacrity to think in how many places he shall hear what he is now writing, read with ecstacies to-

morrow. He will often please himself with reflecting, that the author of a large treatise must proceed with anxiety, lest before the completion of his work, the attention of the publick may have changed its object; but that he who is confined to no single topick, may follow the national taste through all its variations, and catch the *aura popularis*, the gale of favour, from what point soever it shall blow.

Nor is the prospect less likely to ease the doubts of the cautious, and the terrors of the fearful, for to such the shortness of every single paper is a powerful encouragement. He that questions his abilities to arrange the dissimilar parts of an extensive plan, or fears to be lost in a complicated system, may yet hope to adjust a few pages without perplexity; and if, when he turns over the repositories of his memory, he finds his collection too small for a volume, he may yet have enough to furnish out an essay. He that would fear to lay out too much time upon an experiment of which he knows not the event, persuades himself that a few days will shew him what he is to expect from his learning and his genius. If he thinks his own judgment not sufficiently enlightened, he may, by attending to the remarks which every paper will produce, rectify his opinions. If he should with too little premeditation encumber himself by an unwieldy subject, he

can quit it without confessing his ignorance, and pass to other topicks less dangerous, or more tractable. And if he finds, with all his industry, and all his artifices, that he cannot deserve regard, or cannot attain it, he may let the design fall at once, and, without injury to others or himself, retire to amusements of greater pleasure, or to studies of better prospect.

THE DIGNITY AND USEFULNESS OF BIOGRAPHY.

No. 60. Saturday, October 13, 1750.

—Quid sit pulchrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non,
Plenius et melius Chrysippo et Crantore dicit.
HOR.

Whose works the beautiful and base contain,
Of vice and virtue more instructive rules
Than all the sober sages of the schools.
FRANCIS.

ALL joy or sorrow for the happiness or calamities of others is produced by an act of the imagination, that realizes the event however fictitious, or approximates it however remote, by placing us, for a time, in the condition of him whose fortune we contemplate; so that we feel, while the deception lasts, whatever motions would be excited by the same good or evil happening to ourselves.

Our passions are therefore more strongly moved, in proportion as we can more readily adopt the pains or pleasure proposed to our minds, by recognizing them as once our own, or considering them as naturally incident to our state of life. It is not easy for the most artful writer to give us an interest in happiness or misery, which we think ourselves

never likely to feel, and with which we have never yet been made acquainted. Histories of the downfall of kingdoms, and revolutions of empires, are read with great tranquillity; the imperial tragedy pleases common auditors only by its pomp of ornament, and grandeur of ideas: and the man whose faculties have been engrossed by business, and whose heart never fluttered but at the rise or fall of the stocks, wonders how the attention can be seized, or the affection agitated, by a tale of love.

Those parallel circumstances and kindred images, to which we readily conform our minds, are, above all other writings, to be found in narratives of the lives of particular persons; and therefore no species of writing seems more worthy of cultivation than biography, since none can be more delightful or more useful, none can more certainly enchain the heart by irresistible interest, or more widely diffuse instruction to every diversity of condition.

The general and rapid narratives of history, which involve a thousand fortunes in the business of a day, and complicate innumerable incidents in one great transaction, afford few lessons applicable to private life, which derives its comforts and its wretchedness from the right or wrong management of things, which nothing but their frequency makes considerable, *Parvi si non fiant quo-*

tidie, says Pliny, and which can have no place in those relations which never descend below the consultation of senates, the motions of armies, and the schemes of conspirators.

I have often thought that there has rarely passed a life of which a judicious and faithful narrative would not be useful. For, not only every man has, in the mighty mass of the world, great numbers in the same condition with himself, to whom his mistakes and miscarriages, escapes and expedients, would be of immediate and apparent use; but there is such a uniformity in the state of man, considered apart from adventitious and separable decorations and disguises, that there is scarce any possibility of good or ill, but is common to human kind. A great part of the time of those who are placed at the greatest distances by fortune, or by temper, must unavoidably pass in the same manner; and though, when the claims of nature are satisfied, caprice, and vanity, and accident, begin to produce discriminations and peculiarities, yet the eye is not very heedful or quick, which cannot discover the same causes still terminating their influence in the same effects, though sometimes accelerated, sometimes retarded, or perplexed by multiplied combinations. We are all prompted by the same motives, all deceived by the same fallacies, all animated by hope, obstructed by danger, en-

tangled by desire, and seduced by pleasure.

It is frequently objected to relations of particular lives, that they are not distinguished by any striking or wonderful vicissitudes. The scholar who passed his life among his books, the merchant who conducted only his own affairs, the priest, whose sphere of action was not extended beyond that of his duty, are considered as no proper objects of publick regard, however they might have excelled in their several stations, whatever might have been their learning, integrity, and piety. But this notion arises from false measures of excellence and dignity, and must be eradicated by considering, that in the esteem of uncorrupted reason, what is of most use is of most value.

It is, indeed, not improper to take honest advantages of prejudice, and to gain attention by a celebrated name; but the business of the biographer is often to pass slightly over those performances and incidents, which produce vulgar greatness, to lead the thoughts into domestick privacies, and display the minute details of daily life, where exterior appendages are cast aside, and men excel each other only by prudence and by virtue. The account of Thuanus is, with great propriety, said by its author to have been written, that it might lay open to posterity the private and familiar character of

that man, *cujus ingenium et candorem ex ipsius scriptis sunt olim semper miraturi*, whose candour and genius will to the end of time be by his writings preserved in admiration.

There are many invisible circumstances which, whether we read as inquirers after natural or moral knowledge, whether we intend to enlarge our science, or increase our virtue, are more important than publick occurrences. Thus Sallust, the great master of nature, has not forgot, in his account of Catiline, to remark that *his walk was now quick, and again slow*, as an indication of a mind revolving something with violent commotion. Thus the story of Melancthon affords a striking lecture on the value of time, by informing us, that when he made an appointment, he expected not only the hour, but the minute to be fixed, that the day might not run out in the idleness of suspence: and all the plans and enterprizes of De Witt are now of less importance to the world, than that part of his personal character, which represents him as *careful of his health, and negligent of his life*.

But biography has often been allotted to writers who seem very little acquainted with the nature of their task, or very negligent about the performance. They rarely afford any other account than might be collected from publick papers, but imagine themselves writing a life when they exhibit a chrono-

logical series of actions or preferments; and so little regard the manners or behaviour of their heroes, that more knowledge may be gained of a man's real character, by a short conversation with one of his servants, than from a formal and studied narrative, begun with his pedigree, and ended with his funeral.

If now and then they condescend to inform the world of particular facts, they are not always so happy as to select the most important. I know not well what advantage posterity can receive from the only circumstance by which Tickell has distinguished Addison from the rest of mankind, *the irregularity of his pulse:* nor can I think myself overpaid for the time spent in reading the life of Malherb by being enabled to relate after the learned biographer, that Malherb had two predominant opinions; one, that the looseness of a single woman might destroy all her boast of ancient descent; the other, that the French beggars made use very improperly and barbarously of the phrase *noble gentleman*, because either word included the sense to both.

There are, indeed, some natural reasons why these narratives are often written by such as were not likely to give much instruction or delight, and why most accounts of particular persons are barren and useless. If a life be delayed till interest and envy are at an end, we may hope for impartiality, but

must expect little intelligence; for the incidents which give excellence to biography are of a volatile and evanescent kind, such as soon escape the memory, and are rarely transmitted by tradition. We know how few can pourtray a living acquaintance, except by his most prominent and observable particularities, and the grosser features of his mind; and it may be easily imagined how much of this little knowledge may be lost in imparting it, and how soon a succession of copies will lose all resemblance of the original.

If the biographer writes from personal knowledge, and makes haste to gratify the publick curiosity, there is danger lest his interest, his fear, his gratitude, or his tenderness, overpower his fidelity, and tempt him to conceal, if not to invent. There are many who think it an act of piety to hide the faults or failings of their friends, even when they can no longer suffer by their detection; we therefore see whole ranks of characters adorned with uniform panegyrick, and not to be known from one another, but by extrinsick and casual circumstances. "Let me remember," says Hale, "when I find myself inclined to pity a criminal, that there is likewise a pity due to the country." If we owe regard to the memory of the dead, there is yet more respect to be paid to knowledge, to virtue, and to truth.

PREJUDICES AND CAPRICES OF CRITICISM.

No. 93. Tuesday, February 5, 1751.

—Experiar quid concedatur in illos,
Quorum flaminiâ tegitur cinis atque Latinâ.—Juv.

More safely truth to urge her claim presumes,
On names now found alone on books and tombs.

There are few books on which more time is spent by young students, than on treatises which deliver the characters of authors; nor any which oftener deceive the expectation of the reader, or fill his mind with more opinions which the progress of his studies and the increase of his knowledge oblige him to resign.

Baillet has introduced his collection of the decisions of the learned, by an enumeration of the prejudices which mislead the critick, and raise the passions in rebellion against the judgment. His catalogue, though large, is imperfect; and who can hope to complete it? The beauties of writing have been observed to be often such as cannot in the present state of human knowledge be evinced by evidence, or drawn out into demonstrations; they are therefore wholly subject to the imagination, and do not force their effects upon a mind pre-occupied by unfavourable senti-

ments, nor overcome the counteraction of a false principle or of stubborn partiality.

To convince any man against his will is hard, but to please him against his will is justly pronounced by Dryden to be above the reach of human abilities. Interest and passion will hold out long against the closest siege of diagrams and syllogisms, but they are absolutely impregnable to imagery and sentiment; and will forever bid defiance to the most powerful strains of Virgil or Homer, though they may give way in time to the batteries of Euclid or Archimedes.

In trusting therefore to the sentence of a critic, we are in danger not only from that vanity which exalts writers too often to the dignity of teaching what they are yet to learn, from that negligence which sometimes steals upon the most vigilant caution, and that fallibility to which the condition of nature has subjected every human understanding; but from a thousand extrinsick and accidental causes, from every thing which can excite kindness or malevolence, veneration or contempt.

Many of those who have determined with great boldness upon the various degrees of literary merit, may be justly suspected of having passed sentence, as Seneca remarks of Claudius,

> Unâ tantum parte audita
> Sæpe et nullâ,

without much knowledge of the cause before them: for it will not easily be imagined of Langbaine, Borrichius, or Rapin, that they had very accurately perused all the books which they praise or censure: or that, even if nature and learning had qualified them for judges, they could read forever with the attention necessary to just criticism. Such performances, however, are not wholly without their use; for they are commonly just echoes to the voice of fame, and transmit the general suffrage of mankind when they have no particular motives to suppress it.

Criticks, like the rest of mankind, are very frequently misled by interest. The bigotry with which editors regard the authours whom they illustrate or correct, has been generally remarked. Dryden was known to have written most of his critical dissertations only to recommend the work upon which he then happened to be employed; and Addison is suspected to have denied the expediency of poetical justice, because his own Cato was condemned to perish in a good cause.

There are prejudices which authours, not otherwise weak or corrupt, have indulged without scruple; and perhaps some of them are so complicated with our natural affections, that they cannot easily be disentangled from the heart. Scarce any can hear with impartiality a comparison between the writers of his own and another country; and

though it cannot, I think, be charged equally on all nations, that they are blinded with this literary patriotism, yet there are none that do not look upon their authours with the fondness of affinity, and esteem them as well for the place of their birth, as for their knowledge or their wit. There is, therefore, seldom much respect due to comparative criticism, when the competitors are of different countries, unless the judge is of a nation equally indifferent to both. The Italians could not for a long time believe, that there was any learning beyond the mountains; and the French seem generally persuaded, that there are no wits or reasoners equal to their own. I can scarcely conceive that if Scaliger had not considered himself as allied to Virgil, by being born in the same country, he would have found his works so much superior to those of Homer, or have thought the controversy worthy of so much zeal, vehemence, and acrimony.

There is, indeed, one prejudice, and only one, by which it may be doubted whether it is any dishonour to be sometimes misguided. Criticism has so often given occasion to the envious and ill-natured of gratifying their malignity, that some have thought it necessary to recommend the virtue of candour without restriction, and to preclude all future liberty of censure. Writers possessed with this opinion are continually enforcing civility

and decency, recommending to criticks the proper diffidence of themselves, and inculcating the veneration due to celebrated names.

I am not of opinion that these professed enemies of arrogance and severity have much more benevolence or modesty than the rest of mankind; or that they feel in their own hearts, any other intention than to distinguish themselves by their softness and delicacy. Some are modest because they are timorous, and some are lavish of praise because they hope to be repaid.

There is indeed some tenderness due to living writers, when they attack none of those truths which are of importance to the happiness of mankind, and have committed no other offence than that of betraying their own ignorance or dulness. I should think it cruelty to crush an insect who had provoked me only by buzzing in my ear; and would not willingly interrupt the dream of harmless stupidity, or destroy the jest which makes its authour laugh. Yet I am far from thinking this tenderness universally necessary; for he that writes may be considered as a kind of general challenger, whom every one has a right to attack; since he quits the common rank of life, steps forward beyond the lists, and offers his merit to the publick judgment. To commence author is to claim praise, and no man can justly aspire to honour, but at the hazard of disgrace.

But whatever be decided concerning contemporaries, whom he that knows the treachery of the human heart, and considers how often we gratify our own pride or envy under the appearance of contending for elegance and propriety, will find himself not much inclined to disturb; there can surely be no exemptions pleaded to secure them from criticism, who can no longer suffer by reproach, and of whom nothing now remains but their writings and their names. Upon these authours the critick is undoubtedly at full liberty to exercise the strictest severity, since he endangers only his own fame, and, like Æneas when he drew his sword in the infernal regions, encounters phantoms which cannot be wounded. He may indeed pay some regard to established reputation; but he can by that shew of reverence consult only his own security, for all other motives are now at an end.

The faults of a writer of acknowledged excellence are more dangerous, because the influence of his example is more extensive; and the interest of learning requires that they should be discovered and stigmatized, before they have the sanction of antiquity conferred upon them, and become precedents of indisputable authority.

It has, indeed, been advanced by Addison, as one of the characteristicks of a true critick, that he points out beauties rather than

faults. But it is rather natural to a man of learning and genius to apply himself chiefly to the study of writers who have more beauties than faults to be displayed: for the duty of criticism is neither to depreciate, nor dignify by partial representations, but to hold out the light of reason, whatever it may discover; and to promulgate the determinations of truth, whatever she shall dictate.

THE ADVANTAGES OF LIVING IN A GARRET.

No. 117. Tuesday, April 30, 1751.

Ὄσσαν ἐπ' Οὐλύμπῳ μέμασαν θέμεν· αὐτὰρ ἐπ' Ὄσσῃ
Πήλιον εἰνοσίφυλλον, ἵν' οὐρανὸς ἀμβατὸς εἴη.—HOMER.

The gods they challenge, and affect the skies:
Heav'd on Olympus tott'ring Ossa stood;
On Ossa, Pelion nods with all his wood.

POPE.

TO THE RAMBLER.

SIR; Nothing has more retarded the advancement of learning than the disposition of vulgar minds to ridicule and vilify what they cannot comprehend. All industry must be excited by hope; and as the student often proposes no other reward to himself than praise, he is easily discouraged by contempt and insult. He who brings with him into a clamorous multitude the timidity of recluse speculation, and has never hardened his front in publick life, or accustomed his passions to the vicissitudes and accidents, the triumphs and defeats of mixed conversation, will blush at the stare of petulant incredulity, and suffer himself to be driven by a burst of laughter from the fortresses of demonstration. The mechanist will be afraid to assert before hardy contradiction, the possibility of tearing down bulwarks with a silk-worm's

thread; and the astronomer of relating the rapidity of light, the distance of the fixed stars, and the height of the lunar mountains.

If I could by any efforts have shaken off this cowardice, I had not sheltered myself under a borrowed name, nor applied to you for the means of communicating to the publick the theory of a garret; a subject which, except some slight and transient strictures, has been hitherto neglected by those who were best qualified to adorn it, either for want of leisure to prosecute the various researches in which a nice discussion must engage them, or because it requires such diversity of knowledge, and such extent of curiosity, as is scarcely to be found in any single intellect: or perhaps others foresaw the tumults which would be raised against them, and confined their knowledge to their own breasts, and abandoned prejudice and folly to the direction of chance.

That the professors of literature generally reside in the highest stories, has been immemorially observed. The wisdom of the ancients was well acquainted with the intellectual advantages of an elevated situation. why else were the Muses stationed on Olympus or Parnassus, by those who could with equal right have raised them bowers in the vale of Tempe, or erected their altars among the flexures of Meander? Why was Jove himself nursed upon a mountain? or why did the

goddesses, when the prize of beauty was contested, try the cause upon the top of Ida? Such were the fictions by which the great masters of the earlier ages endeavoured to inculcate to posterity the importance of a garret, which, though they had been long obscured by the negligence and ignorance of succeeding times, were well enforced by the celebrated symbol of Pythagoras, ἀνεμῶν πνεόντων τὴν ἠχῶ προσκύνει; "when the wind blows, worship its echo." This could not but be understood by his disciples as an inviolable injunction to live in a garret, which I have found frequently visited by the echo and the wind. Nor was the tradition wholly obliterated in the age of Augustus, for Tibullus evidently congratulates himself upon his garret, not without some allusion to the Pythagorean precept:

Quàm juvat immites ventos audire cubantem—
Aut, gelidas hybernus aquas cum fuderit auster,
Securum somnos, imbre juvante, sequi!

How sweet in sleep to pass the careless hours,
Lull'd by the beating winds and dashing show'rs!

And it is impossible not to discover the fondness of Lucretius, an earlier writer, for a garret, in his description of the lofty towers of serene learning, and of the pleasure with which a wise man looks down upon the confused and erratick state of the world moving below him:

Sed nil dulcius est, bene quàm munita tenere
Edita doctrinâ sapientum templa serena;
Despicere unde queas alios, passimque videre
Errare, atque viam palanteis quærere vitæ.

——'Tis sweet thy lab'ring steps to guide
To virtue's heights, with wisdom well supplied,
And all the magazines of learning fortified:
From thence to look below on human kind,
Bewilder'd in the maze of life, and blind.
DRYDEN.

The institution has, indeed, continued to our own time; the garret is still the usual receptacle of the philosopher and poet; but this, like many ancient customs, is perpetuated only by an accidental imitation, without knowledge of the original reason for which it was established.

Causa latet; res est notissima.

The cause is secret, but th' effect is known.
ADDISON.

Conjectures have, indeed, been advanced concerning these habitations of literature, but without much satisfaction to the judicious inquirer. Some have imagined, that the garret is generally chosen by the wits as most easily rented; and concluded that no man rejoices in his aerial abode, but on the days of payment. Others suspect, that a garret is chiefly convenient, as it is remoter than any other part of the house from the outer door, which is often observed to be infested by visitants, who talk incessantly of

beer, or linen, or a coat, and repeat the same sounds every morning, and sometimes again in the afternoon, without any variation, except that they grow daily more importunate and clamorous, and raise their voices in time from mournful murmurs to raging vociferations. This eternal monotony is always detestable to a man whose chief pleasure is to enlarge his knowledge, and vary his ideas. Others talk of freedom from noise, and abstraction from common business or amusements; and some, yet more visionary, tell us, that the faculties are enlarged by open prospects, and that the fancy is more at liberty, when the eye ranges without confinement.

These conveniences may perhaps all be found in a well-chosen garret; but surely they cannot be supposed sufficiently important to have operated invariably upon different climates, distant ages, and separate nations. Of an universal practice, there must still be presumed an universal cause, which, however recondite and abstruse, may be perhaps reserved to make me illustrious by its discovery, and you by its promulgation.

It is universally known that the faculties of the mind are invigorated or weakened by the state of the body, and that the body is in a great measure regulated by the various compressions of the ambient element. The effects of the air in the production or cure of

corporeal maladies have been acknowledged from the time of Hippocrates; but no man has yet sufficiently considered how far it may influence the operations of the genius, though every day affords instances of local understanding, of wits and reasoners, whose faculties are adapted to some single spot, and who, when they are removed to any other place, sink at once into silence and stupidity. I have discovered, by a long series of observations, that invention and elocution suffer great impediments from dense and impure vapours, and that the tenuity of a defecated air at a proper distance from the surface of the earth, accelerates the fancy, and sets at liberty those intellectual powers which were before shackled by too strong attraction, and unable to expand themselves under the pressure of a gross atmosphere. I have found dulness to quicken into sentiment in a thin ether, as water, though not very hot, boils in a receiver partly exhausted; and heads, in appearance empty, have teemed with notions upon rising ground, as the flaccid sides of a football would have swelled out into stiffness and extension.

For this reason I never think myself qualified to judge decisively of any man's faculties, whom I have only known in one degree of elevation; but take some opportunity of attending him from the cellar to the garret, and try upon him all the various degrees of rare-

faction and condensation, tension and laxity. If he is neither vivacious aloft, nor serious below, I then consider him as hopeless; but as it seldom happens, that I do not find the temper to which the texture of his brain is fitted, I accommodate him in time with a tube of mercury, first marking the points most favourable to his intellects, according to rules which I have long studied, and which I may, perhaps, reveal to mankind in a complete treatise of barometrical pneumatology.

Another cause of the gaiety and sprightliness of the dwellers in garrets is probably the increase of that vertiginous motion, with which we are carried round by the diurnal revolution of the earth. The power of agitation upon the spirits is well known; every man has felt his heart lightened in a rapid vehicle, or on a galloping horse; and nothing is plainer, than that he who towers to the fifth story, is whirled through more space by every circumrotation, than another that grovels upon the ground-floor. The nations between the tropics are known to be fiery, inconstant, inventive, and fanciful; because, living at the utmost length of the earth's diameter, they are carried about with more swiftness than those whom nature has placed nearer to the poles; and therefore, as it becomes a wise man to struggle with the inconveniences of his country, whenever celerity and acuteness are requisite, we must actuate

our languor by taking a few turns round the centre in a garret.

If you imagine that I ascribe to air and motion effects which they cannot produce, I desire you to consult your own memory, and consider whether you have never known a man acquire reputation in his garret, which, when fortune or a patron had placed him upon the first floor, he was unable to maintain; and who never recovered his former vigour of understanding, till he was restored to his original situation. That a garret will make every man a wit, I am very far from supposing; I know there are some who would continue blockheads even on the summit of the Andes, or on the peak of Teneriffe. But let not any man be considered as unimprovable till this potent remedy has been tried; for perhaps he was formed to be great only in a garret, as the joiner of Aretæus was rational in no other place but his own shop.

I think a frequent removal to various distances from the centre, so necessary to a just estimate of intellectual abilities, and consequently of so great use in education, that if I hoped that the publick could be persuaded to so expensive an experiment, I would propose, that there should be a cavern dug, and a tower erected, like those which Bacon describes in Solomon's house, for the expansion and concentration of understand-

ing, according to the exigence of different employments, or constitutions. Perhaps some that fume away in meditations upon time and space in the tower, might compose tables of interest at a certain depth; and he that upon level ground stagnates in silence, or creeps in narrative, might at the height of half a mile, ferment into merriment, sparkle with repartee, and froth with declamation.

Addison observes, that we may find the heat of Virgil's climate, in some lines of his Georgic: so, when I read a composition, I immediately determine the height of the author's habitation. As an elaborate performance is commonly said to smell of the lamp, my commendation of a noble thought, a sprightly sally, or a bold figure, is to pronounce it fresh from the garret; an expression which would break from me upon the perusal of most of your papers, did I not believe, that you sometimes quit the garret, and ascend into the cock-loft.

HYPERTATUS.

IDLENESS A MISERABLE STATE.

No. 134. Saturday, June 29, 1751.

Quis scit, an adjiciant hodiernæ crastina summæ
Tempora Di superi!—Hor.

Who knows if Heav'n, with ever-bounteous pow'r,
Shall add to-morrow to the present hour?
Francis.

I sat yesterday morning employed in deliberating on which, among the various subjects that occurred to my imagination, I should bestow the paper of to-day. After a short effort of meditation by which nothing was determined, I grew every moment more irresolute, my ideas wandered from the first intention, and I rather wished to think, than thought, upon any settled subject; till at last I was awakened from this dream of study by a summons from the press; the time was come for which I had been thus negligently purposing to provide, and, however dubious or sluggish, I was now necessitated to write.

Though to a writer whose design is so comprehensive and miscellaneous, that he may accommodate himself with a topick from every scene of life, or view of nature, it is no great aggravation of his task to be obliged

to a sudden composition; yet I could not forbear to reproach myself for having so long neglected what was unavoidably to be done, and of which every moment's idleness increased the difficulty. There was however some pleasure in reflecting that I, who had only trifled till diligence was necessary, might still congratulate myself upon my superiority to multitudes, who have trifled till diligence is vain; who can by no degree of activity or resolution recover the opportunities which have slipped away; and who are condemned by their own carelessness to hopeless calamity and barren sorrow.

The folly of allowing ourselves to delay what we know cannot be finally escaped, is one of the general weaknesses, which, in spite of the instruction of moralists, and the remonstrances of reason, prevail to a greater or less degree in every mind; even they who most steadily withstand it, find it, if not the most violent, the most pertinacious of their passions, always renewing its attacks, and though often vanquished, never destroyed.

It is indeed natural to have particular regard to the time present, and to be most solicitous for that which is by its nearness enabled to make the strongest impressions. When therefore any sharp pain is to be suffered, or any formidable danger to be incurred, we can scarcely exempt ourselves wholly from the seducements of imagina-

tion; we readily believe that another day will bring some support or advantage which we now want; and are easily persuaded, that the moment of necessity which we desire never to arrive, is at a great distance from us.

Thus life is languished away in the gloom of anxiety, and consumed in collecting resolutions which the next morning dissipates; in forming purposes which we scarcely hope to keep, and reconciling ourselves to our own cowardice by excuses, which, while we admit them, we know to be absurd. Our firmness is, by the continual contemplation of misery, hourly impaired; every submission to our fear enlarges its dominion; we not only waste that time in which the evil we dread might have been suffered and surmounted, but even, where procrastination produces no absolute increase of our difficulties, make them less superable to ourselves by habitual terrors. When evils cannot be avoided, it is wise to contract the interval of expectation; to meet the mischiefs which will overtake us if we fly; and suffer only their real malignity, without the conflicts of doubt, and anguish of anticipation.

To act is far easier than to suffer; yet we every day see the progress of life retarded by the *vis inertiæ*, the mere repugnance to motion, and find multitudes repining at the want of that which nothing but idleness

hinders them from enjoying. The case of Tantalus, in the region of poetick punishment, was somewhat to be pitied, because the fruits that hung about him retired from his hand; but what tenderness can be claimed by those who, though perhaps they suffer the pains of Tantalus, will never lift their hands for their own relief?

There is nothing more common among this torpid generation than murmurs and complaints; murmurs at uneasiness which only vacancy and suspicion expose them to feel, and complaints of distresses which it is in their own power to remove. Laziness is commonly associated with timidity. Either fear originally prohibits endeavours by infusing despair of success; or the frequent failure of irresolute struggles, and the constant desire of avoiding labour, impress by degrees false terrours on the mind. But fear, whether natural or acquired, when once it has full possession of the fancy, never fails to employ it upon visions of calamity, such as, if they are not dissipated by useful employment, will soon overcast it with horrors, and embitter life not only with those miseries by which all earthly beings are really more or less tormented, but with those which do not yet exist, and which can only be discerned by the perspicacity of cowardice.

Among all who sacrifice future advantage to present inclination, scarcely any gain so

little as those that suffer themselves to freeze in idleness. Others are corrupted by some enjoyment of more or less power to gratify the passions; but to neglect our duties, merely to avoid the labour of performing them, a labour which is always punctually rewarded, is surely to sink under weak temptations. Idleness never can secure tranquillity; the call of reason and of conscience will pierce the closest pavilion of the sluggard, and though it may not have force to drive him from his down, will be loud enough to hinder him from sleep. Those moments which he cannot resolve to make useful by devoting them to the great business of his being, will still be usurped by powers that will not leave them to his disposal; remorse and vexation will seize upon them, and forbid him to enjoy what he is so desirous to appropriate.

There are other causes of inactivity incident to more active faculties and more acute discernment. He to whom many objects of pursuit arise at the same time, will frequently hesitate between different desires, till a rival has precluded him, or change his course as new attractions prevail, and harass himself without advancing. He who sees different ways to the same end, will, unless he watches carefully over his own conduct, lay out too much of his attention upon the comparison of probabilities, and the adjustment of ex-

pedients, and pause in the choice of his road till some accident intercepts his journey. He whose penetration extends to remote consequences, and who, whenever he applies his attention to any design, discovers new prospects of advantage, and possibilities of improvement, will not easily be persuaded that his project is ripe for execution; but will superadd one contrivance to another, endeavor to unite various purposes in one operation, multiply complications, and refine niceties, till he is entangled in his own scheme, and bewildered in the perplexity of various intentions. He that resolves to unite all the beauties of situation in a new purchase, must waste his life in roving to no purpose from province to province. He that hopes in the same house to obtain every convenience, may draw plans and study Palladio, but will never lay a stone. He will attempt a treatise on some important subject, and amass materials, consult authours, and study all the dependant and collateral parts of learning, but never conclude himself qualified to write. He that has abilities to conceive perfection, will not easily be content without it; and since perfection cannot be reached, will lose the opportunity of doing well in the vain hope of unattainable excellence.

The certainty that life cannot be long, and the probability that it will be much shorter than nature allows, ought to awaken every

man to the active prosecution of whatever he is desirous to perform. It is true, that no diligence can ascertain success; death may intercept the swiftest career; but he who is cut off in the execution of an honest undertaking, has at least the honour of falling in his rank, and has fought the battle though he missed the victory.

AN AUTHOUR IN QUEST OF HIS CHARACTER.

No. 146. Saturday, August 10, 1751.

> Sunt illic duo, tresve, qui revolvant
> Nostrarum tineas ineptiarum:
> Sed cum sponsio, fabulæque lassæ
> De scorpo fuerint incitato.—MART.
>
> 'Tis possible that one or two
> These fooleries of mine may view;
> But then the bettings must be o'er,
> Nor Crab or Childers talk'd of more.
> F. LEWIS.

NONE of the projects or designs which exercise the mind of man are equally subject to obstructions and disappointments, with the pursuit of fame. Riches cannot easily be denied to them who have something of greater value to offer in exchange; he whose fortune is endangered by litigation, will not refuse to augment the wealth of the lawyer; he whose days are darkened by languor, or whose nerves are excruciated by pain, is compelled to pay tribute to the science of healing. But praise may be always omitted without inconvenience. When once a man has made celebrity necessary to his happiness, he has put it in the power of the weakest and most timorous malignity, if not to take away his

satisfaction, at least to withhold it. His enemies may indulge their pride by airy negligence, and gratify their malice by quiet neutrality. They that could never have injured a character by invectives, may combine to annihilate it by silence; as the women of Rome threatened to put an end to conquest and dominion, by supplying no children to the commonwealth.

When a writer has with long toil produced a work intended to burst upon mankind with unexpected lustre, and withdraw the attention of the learned world from every other controversy or inquiry, he is seldom contented to wait long without the enjoyment of his new praises. With an imagination full of his own importance, he walks out like a monarch in disguise to learn the various opinions of his readers. Prepared to feast upon admiration; composed to encounter censures without emotion; and determined not to suffer his quiet to be injured by a sensibility too exquisite of praise or blame, but to laugh with equal contempt at vain objections and injudicious commendations, he enters the places of mingled conversation, sits down to his tea in an obscure corner, and while he appears to examine a file of antiquated journals, catches the conversation of the whole room. He listens, but hears no mention of his book, and therefore supposes that he has disappointed his curios-

ity by delay; and that as men of learning would naturally begin their conversation with such a wonderful novelty, they had digressed to other subjects before his arrival. The company disperses, and their places are supplied by others equally ignorant, or equally careless. The same expectation hurries him to another place, from which the same disappointment drives him soon away. His impatience then grows violent and tumultuous; he ranges over the town with restless curiosity, and hears in one quarter of a cricket-match, in another of a pick-pocket; is told by some of an unexpected bankruptcy; by others of a turtle-feast; is sometimes provoked by importunate inquiries after the white bear, and sometimes with praises of the dancing dog; he is afterwards entreated to give his judgment upon a wager about the height of the monument; invited to see a foot-race in the adjacent villages; desired to read a ludicrous advertisement; or consulted about the most effectual method of making inquiry after a favourite cat. The whole world is busied in affairs which he thinks below the notice of reasonable creatures, and which are nevertheless sufficient to withdraw all regard from his labours and his merits.

He resolves at last to violate his own modesty, and to recall the talkers from their folly by an inquiry after himself. He finds

every one provided with an answer: one has seen the work advertised, but never met with any that had read it; another had been so often imposed upon by specious titles, that he never buys a book till its character is established; a third wonders what any man can hope to produce after so many writers of greater eminence; the next has inquired after the author, but can hear no account of him, and therefore suspects the name to be fictitious; and another knows him to be a man condemned by indigence to write too frequently what he does not understand.

Many are the consolations with which the unhappy authour endeavours to allay his vexation, and fortify his patience. He has written with too little indulgence to the understanding of common readers; he has fallen upon an age in which solid knowledge, and delicate refinement, have given way to a low merriment, and idle buffoonery, and therefore no writer can hope for distinction, who has any higher purpose than to raise laughter. He finds that his enemies, such as superiority will always raise, have been industrious, while his performance was in the press, to vilify and blast it; and that the bookseller, whom he had resolved to enrich, has rivals that obstruct the circulation of his copies. He at last reposes upon the consideration, that the noblest works of learning and genius

have always made their way slowly against ignorance and prejudice; and that reputation, which is never to be lost, must be gradually obtained, as animals of longest life are observed not soon to attain their full stature and strength.

By such arts of voluntary delusion does every man endeavour to conceal his own unimportance from himself. It is long before we are convinced of the small proportion which every individual bears to the collective body of mankind; or learn how few can be interested in the fortune of any single man; how little vacancy is left in the world for any new object of attention; to how small extent the brightest blaze of merit can be spread amidst the mists of business and of folly; and how soon it is clouded by the intervention of other novelties. Not only the writer of books, but the commander of armies, and the deliverer of nations, will easily outlive all noisy and popular reputation; he may be celebrated for a time by the public voice, but his actions and his name will soon be considered as remote and unaffecting, and be rarely mentioned but by those whose alliance gives them some vanity to gratify by frequent commemoration.

It seems not to be sufficiently considered how little renown can be admitted in the world. Mankind are kept perpetually busy by their fears or desires, and have not more

leisure from their own affairs, than to acquaint themselves with the accidents of the current day. Engaged in contriving some refuge from calamity, or in shortening the way to some new possession, they seldom suffer their thoughts to wander to the past or future; none but a few solitary students have leisure to inquire into the claims of ancient heroes or sages; and names which hoped to range over kingdoms and continents, shrink at last into cloisters or colleges.

Nor is it certain, that even of these dark and narrow habitations, these last retreats of fame, the possession will be long kept. Of men devoted to literature, very few extend their views beyond some particular science, and the greater part seldom inquire, even in their own profession, for any authors but those whom the present mode of study happens to force upon their notice; they desire not to fill their minds with unfashionable knowledge, but contentedly resign to oblivion those books which they now find censured or neglected.

The hope of fame is necessarily connected with such considerations as must abate the ardour of confidence, and repress the vigour of pursuit. Whoever claims renown from any kind of excellence, expects to fill the place which is now possessed by another; for there are already names of every class sufficient to employ all that will desire to remember

them; and surely he that is pushing his predecessors into the gulph of obscurity, cannot but sometimes suspect, that he must himself sink in like manner, and as he stands upon the same precipice, be swept away with the same violence.

It sometimes happens, that fame begins when life is at an end: but far the greater number of candidates for applause have owed their reception in the world to some favourable casualties, and have therefore immediately sunk into neglect, when death stripped them of their casual influence, and neither fortune nor patronage operated in their favour. Among those who have better claims to regard, the honour paid to their memory is commonly proportionate to the reputation which they enjoyed in their lives, though still growing fainter, as it is at a greater distance from the first emission; and since it is so difficult to obtain the notice of contemporaries, how little is it to be hoped from future times! What can merit effect by its own force, when the help of art or friendship can scarcely support it?

VALEDICTORY.

No. 208. Saturday, March 14, 1752.

Ἡράκλειτος ἐγώ· τί με ὦ κάτω ἕλκετ' ἄμουσοι;
Οὐχ' ὑμῖν ἐπόνουν, τοῖς δέ μ' ἐπισταμένοις·
Εἷς ἐμοὶ ἄνθρωπος τρισμύριοι· οἱ δ' ἀνάριθμοι
Οὐδεις· ταῦτ' αὐδῶ καὶ παρὰ Περσεφόνῃ.
DIOG. LAERT.

Begone, ye blockheads, Heraclitus cries,
And leave my labours to the learn'd and wise;
By wit, by knowledge, studious to be read,
I scorn the multitude, alive and dead.

TIME, which puts an end to all human pleasures and sorrows, has likewise concluded the labours of the RAMBLER. Having supported, for two years, the anxious employment of a periodical writer, and multiplied my essays to upwards of two hundred, I have now determined to desist.

The reasons of this resolution it is of little importance to declare, since justification is unnecessary when no objection is made. I am far from supposing, that the cessation of my performances will raise any inquiry, for I have never been much a favourite of the publick, nor can boast that, in the progress of my undertaking, I have been animated by the

rewards of the liberal, the caresses of the great, or the praises of the eminent.

But I have no design to gratify pride by submission, or malice by lamentation; nor think it reasonable to complain of neglect from those whose regard I never solicited. If I have not been distinguished by the distributors of literary honours, I have seldom descended to the arts by which favour is obtained. I have seen the meteors of fashion rise and fall, without any attempt to add a moment to their duration. I have never complied with temporary curiosity, nor enabled my readers to discuss the topick of the day; I have rarely exemplified my assertions by living characters; in my papers, no man could look for censures of his enemies, or praises of himself; and they only were expected to peruse them, whose passions left them leisure for abstracted truth, and whom virtue could please by its naked dignity.

To some, however, I am indebted for encouragement, and to others for assistance. The number of my friends was never great, but they have been such as would not suffer me to think that I was writing in vain, and I did not feel much dejection from the want of popularity.

My obligations having not been frequent, my acknowledgments may be soon dispatched. I can restore to all my correspondents their productions, with little diminu-

tion of the bulk of my volumes, though not without the loss of some pieces to which particular honours have been paid.

The parts from which I claim no other praise than that of having given the man opportunity of appearing, are the four billets in the tenth paper, the second letter in the fifteenth, the thirtieth, the forty-fourth, the ninety-seventh, and the hundredth papers, and the second letter in the hundred and seventh.

Having thus deprived myself of many excuses which candour might have admitted for the inequality of my compositions, being no longer able to allege the necessity of gratifying correspondents, the importunity with which publication was solicited, or obstinacy with which correction was rejected, I must remain accountable for all my faults, and submit, without subterfuge, to the censures of criticism, which, however, I shall not endeavour to soften by a formal deprecation, or to overbear by the influence of a patron. The supplications of an authour never yet reprieved him a moment from oblivion; and, though greatness has sometimes sheltered guilt, it can afford no protection to ignorance or dulness. Having hitherto attempted only the propagation of truth, I will not at last violate it by the confession of terrours which I do not feel; having laboured to maintain the dignity of virtue, I will not now degrade it by the meanness of dedication.

The seeming vanity with which I have sometimes spoken of myself, would perhaps require an apology, were it not extenuated by the example of those who have published essays before me, and by the privilege which every nameless writer has been hitherto allowed. "A mask," says Castiglione, "confers a right of acting and speaking with less restraint, even when the wearer happens to be known." He that is discovered without his own consent, may claim some indulgence, and cannot be rigorously called to justify those sallies or frolicks which his disguise must prove him desirous to conceal.

But I have been cautious lest this offence should be frequently or grossly committed; for, as one of the philosophers directs us to live with a friend, as with one that is sometime to become an enemy, I have always thought it the duty of an anonymous author to write, as if he expected to be hereafter known.

I am willing to flatter myself with hopes, that, by collecting these papers, I am not preparing, for my future life, either shame or repentance. That all are happily imagined, or accurately polished, that the same sentiments have not sometimes recurred, or the same expressions been too frequently repeated, I have not confidence in my abilities sufficient to warrant. He that condemns himself to compose on a stated day, will often bring to

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his task an attention dissipated, a memory embarrassed, an imagination overwhelmed, a mind distracted with anxieties, a body languishing with disease: He will labour on a barren topic, till it is too late to change it; or, in the ardour of invention, diffuse his thoughts into wild exuberance, which the pressing hour of publication cannot suffer judgment to examine or reduce.

Whatever shall be the final sentence of mankind, I have at least endeavoured to deserve their kindness. I have laboured to refine our language to grammatical purity, and to clear it from colloquial barbarisms, licentious idioms, and irregular combinations. Something, perhaps, I have added to the elegance of its construction, and something to the harmony of its cadence. When common words were less pleasing to the ear, or less distinct in their signification, I have familiarized the terms of philosophy, by applying them to popular ideas, but have rarely admitted any word not authorized by former writers; for I believe that whoever knows the English tongue in its present extent, will be able to express his thoughts without further help from other nations.

As it has been my principal design to inculcate wisdom or piety, I have allotted few papers to the idle sports of imagination. Some, perhaps, may be found, of which the highest excellence is harmless merriment; but

scarcely any man is so steadily serious as not to complain, that the severity of dictatorial instruction has been too seldom relieved, and that he is driven by the sternness of the Rambler's philosophy to more cheerful and airy companions.

Next to the excursions of fancy are the disquisitions of criticism, which, in my opinion, is only to be ranked among the subordinate and instrumental arts. Arbitrary decision and general exclamation I have carefully avoided, by asserting nothing without a reason, and establishing all my principles of judgment on unalterable and evident truth.

In the pictures of life I have never been so studious of novelty or surprise, as to depart wholly from all resemblance; a fault which writers deservedly celebrated frequently commit, that they may raise, as the occasion required, either mirth or abhorrence. Some enlargement may be allowed to declamation, and some exaggeration to burlesque; but as they deviate farther from reality, they become less useful, because their lessons will fail of application. The mind of the reader is carried away from the contemplation of his own manners; he finds in himself no likeness to the phantom before him; and though he laughs or rages, is not reformed.

The essays professedly serious, if I have been able to execute my own intentions, will be found exactly conformable to the precepts

of Christianity, without any accommodation to the licentiousness and levity of the present age. I therefore look back on this part of my work with pleasure, which no blame or praise of man shall diminish or augment. I shall never envy the honours which wit and learning obtain in any other cause, if I can be numbered among the writers who have given ardour to virtue, and confidence to truth.

Αὐτῶν ἐκ μακάρων ἀντάξιος εἴη ἀμοιβή.

Celestial pow'rs! that piety regard,
From You my labours wait their last reward.

The Idler

The Idler.*

SALUTATORY.

No. 1. Saturday, April 15, 1758.

Vacui sub umbra
Lusimus.—Hor.

Those who attempted periodical essays seem to be often stopped in the beginning, by the difficulty of finding a proper title. Two writers, since the time of the Spectator, have assumed his name, without any pretensions to lawful inheritance; an effort was once made to revive the Tatler; and the strange appellations, by which other papers have been called, show that the authors were distressed, like the natives of America, who come to the Europeans to beg a name.

It will be easily believed of the Idler, that if his title had required any search, he never would have found it. Every mode of life has its conveniences. The Idler, who habituates himself to be satisfied with what he can most easily obtain, not only escapes labours which

*The numbers of the Idler were originally published in a newspaper called "The Universal Chronicle, or Weekly Gazette," of which Mr. John Newbery was proprietor.

are often fruitless, but sometimes succeeds better than those who despise all that is within their reach, and think every thing more valuable as it is harder to be acquired.

If similitude of manners be a motive to kindness, the Idler may flatter himself with universal patronage. There is no single character under which such numbers are comprised. Every man is, or hopes to be, an Idler. Even those who seem to differ most from us are hastening to increase our fraternity; as peace is the end of war, so to be idle is the ultimate purpose of the busy.

There is perhaps no appellation by which a writer can better denote his kindred to the human species. It has been found hard to describe man by an adequate definition. Some philosophers have called him a reasonable animal; but others have considered reason as a quality of which many creatures partake. He has been termed likewise a laughing animal; but it is said that some men have never laughed. Perhaps man may be more properly distinguished as an idle animal; for there is no man who is not sometimes idle. It is at least a definition from which none that shall find it in this paper can be excepted; for who can be more idle than the reader of the Idler?

That the definition may be complete, idleness must be not only the general, but the peculiar characteristic of man; and perhaps

man is the only being that can properly be called idle, that does by others what he might do himself, or sacrifices duty or pleasure to the love of ease.

Scarcely any name can be imagined from which less envy or competition is to be dreaded. The Idler has no rivals or enemies. The man of business forgets him; the man of enterprise despises him; and though such as tread the same track of life fall commonly into jealousy and discord, Idlers are always found to associate in peace; and he who is most famed for doing nothing, is glad to meet another as idle as himself.

What is to be expected from this paper, whether it will be uniform or various, learned or familiar, serious or gay, political or moral, continued or interrupted, it is hoped that no reader will inquire. That the Idler has some scheme, cannot be doubted, for to form schemes is the Idler's privilege. But though he has many projects in his head, he is now grown sparing of communication, having observed, that his hearers are apt to remember what he forgets himself; that his tardiness of execution exposes him to the encroachments of those who catch a hint and fall to work; and that very specious plans, after long contrivance and pompous displays, have subsided in weariness without a trial, and without miscarriage have been blasted by derision.

Something the Idler's character may be supposed to promise. Those that are curious after diminutive history, who watch the revolutions of families, and the rise and fall of characters, either male or female, will hope to be gratified by this paper; for the Idler is always inquisitive and seldom retentive. He that delights in obloquy and satire, and wishes to see clouds gathering over any reputation that dazzles him with its brightness, will snatch up the Idler's essays with a beating heart. The Idler is naturally censorious; those who attempt nothing themselves, think every thing easily performed, and consider the unsuccessful always as criminal.

I think it necessary to give notice, that I make no contract, nor incur any obligation. If those who depend on the Idler for intelligence and entertainment, should suffer the disappointment which commonly follows ill-placed expectations, they are to lay the blame only on themselves.

Yet hope is not wholly to be cast away. The Idler, though sluggish, is yet alive, and may sometimes be stimulated to vigour and activity. He may descend into profoundness, or tower into sublimity; for the diligence of an Idler is rapid and impetuous, as ponderous bodies forced into velocity move with violence proportionate to their weight.

But these vehement exertions of intellect cannot be frequent, and he will therefore gladly receive help from any correspondent, who shall enable him to please without his own labour. He excludes no style, he prohibits no subject; only let him that writes to the Idler remember, that his letters must not be long; no words are to be squandered in declarations of esteem, or confessions of inability; conscious dulness has little right to be prolix, and praise is not so welcome to the Idler as quiet.

DISCOURSES ON THE WEATHER.

No. 11. Saturday, June 24, 1758.

It is commonly observed, that when two Englishmen meet, their first talk is of the weather; they are in haste to tell each other, what each must already know, that it is hot or cold, bright or cloudy, windy or calm.

There are, among the numerous lovers of subtilties and paradoxes, some who derive the civil institutions of every country from its climate, who impute freedom and slavery to the temperature of the air, can fix the meridian of vice and virtue, and tell at what degree of latitude we are to expect courage or timidity, knowledge or ignorance.

From these dreams of idle speculation, a slight survey of life, and a little knowledge of history, is sufficient to awaken any inquirer, whose ambition of distinction has not overpowered his love of truth. Forms of government are seldom the result of much deliberation; they are framed by chance in popular assemblies, or in conquered countries by despotic authority. Laws are often occasional, often capricious, made always by a few, and sometimes by a single voice. Nations have changed their characters; slavery

is now nowhere more patiently endured, than in countries once inhabited by the zealots of liberty.

But national customs can arise only from general agreement; they are not imposed, but chosen, and are continued only by the continuance of their cause. An Englishman's notice of the weather is the natural consequence of changeable skies and uncertain seasons. In many parts of the world, wet weather and dry are regularly expected at certain periods; but in our island every man goes to sleep, unable to guess whether he shall behold in the morning a bright or cloudy atmosphere, whether his rest shall be lulled by a shower, or broken by a tempest. We therefore rejoice mutually at good weather, as at an escape from something that we feared; and mutually complain of bad, as of the loss of something that we hoped.

Such is the reason of our practice; and who shall treat it with contempt? Surely not the attendant on a court, whose business is to watch the looks of a being weak and foolish as himself, and whose vanity is to recount the names of men, who might drop into nothing, and leave no vacuity; nor the proprietor of funds, who stops his acquaintance in the street to tell him of the loss of half-a-crown; nor the inquirer after news, who fills his head with foreign events, and

talks of skirmishes and sieges, of which no consequence will ever reach his hearers or himself. The weather is a nobler and more interesting subject; it is the present state of the skies and of the earth, on which plenty and famine are suspended, on which millions depend for the necessaries of life.

The weather is frequently mentioned for another reason, less honourable to my dear countrymen. Our dispositions too frequently change with the colour of the sky; and when we find ourselves cheerful and good-natured, we naturally pay our acknowledgments to the powers of sunshine; or, if we sink into dulness and peevishness, look round the horizon for an excuse, and charge our discontent upon an easterly wind or a cloudy day.

Surely nothing is more reproachful to a being endowed with reason, than to resign its powers to the influence of the air, and live in dependance on the weather and the wind, for the only blessings which nature has put into our power, tranquillity and benevolence. To look up to the sky for the nutriment of our bodies, is the condition of nature; to call upon the sun for peace and gaiety, or deprecate the clouds lest sorrow should overwhelm us, is the cowardice of idleness, and the idolatry of folly.

Yet even in this age of inquiry and knowledge, when superstition is driven away, and omens and prodigies have lost their ter-

rours, we find this folly countenanced by frequent examples. Those that laugh at the portentous glare of a comet, and hear a crow with equal tranquillity from the right or left, will yet talk of times and situations, proper for intellectual performances, will imagine the fancy exalted by vernal breezes, and the reason invigorated by a bright calm.

If men who have given up themselves to fanciful credulity would confine their conceits in their own minds, they might regulate their lives by the barometer, with inconvenience only to themselves; but to fill the world with accounts of intellects subject to ebb and flow, of one genius that awakened in the spring, and another that ripened in the autumn, of one mind expanded in the summer, and of another concentrated in the winter, is no less dangerous than to tell children of bugbears and goblins. Fear will find every house haunted; and idleness will wait for ever for the moment of illumination.

The distinctions of seasons is produced only by imagination operating on luxury. To temperance every day is bright, and every hour is propitious to diligence. He that shall resolutely excite his faculties, or exert his virtues, will soon make himself superior to the seasons, and may set at defiance the morning mist, and the evening damp, the blasts of the east, and the clouds of the south.

It was the boast of the Stoik philosophy, to make man unshaken by calamity, and unelated by success, incorruptible by pleasure, and invulnerable by pain; these are heights of wisdom which none ever attained, and to which few can aspire; but there are lower degrees of constancy necessary to common virtue: and every man, however he may distrust himself in the extremes of good or evil, might at least struggle against the tyranny of the climate, and refuse to enslave his virtue or his reason to the most variable of all variations, the changes of the weather.

ON THE DEATH OF A FRIEND (JOHNSON'S MOTHER).

No. 41. Saturday, January 27, 1759.

THE following letter relates to an affliction perhaps not necessary to be imparted to the public; but I could not persuade myself to suppress it, because I know the sentiments to be sincere, and I feel no disposition to provide for this day any other entertainment.

At tu quisquis eris, miseri qui cruda poetæ
Credideris fletu funera digna tuo,
Hæc postrema tibi sit flendi causa, fluatque
Lenis inoffenso vitaque morsque gradu.

MR. IDLER,

Notwithstanding the warnings of philosophers, and the daily examples of losses and misfortunes which life forces upon our observation, such is the absorption of our thoughts in the business of the present day, such the resignation of our reason to empty hopes of future felicity, or such our unwillingness to foresee what we dread, that every calamity comes suddenly upon us, and not only presses us as a burden, but crushes as a blow.

There are evils which happen out of the common course of nature, against which it is

no reproach not to be provided. A flash of lightning intercepts the traveller in his way. The concussion of an earthquake heaps the ruins of cities upon their inhabitants. But other miseries time brings, though silently yet visibly, forward by its even lapse, which yet approach us unseen because we turn our eyes away, and seize us unresisted because we could not arm ourselves against them but by setting them before us.

That it is vain to shrink from what cannot be avoided, and to hide that from ourselves which must some time be found, is a truth which we all know, but which all neglect, and perhaps none more than the speculative reasoner, whose thoughts are always from home, whose eye wanders over life, whose fancy dances over meteors of happiness kindled by himself, and who examines every thing rather than his own state.

Nothing is more evident than that the decays of age must terminate in death; yet there is no man, says Tully, who does not believe that he may yet live another year; and there is none who does not, upon the same principle, hope another year for his parent or his friend: but the fallacy will be in time detected: the last year, the last day, must come. It has come, and is past. The life which made my own life pleasant is at an end, and the gates of death are shut upon my prospects.

On the Death of a Friend

The loss of a friend upon whom the heart was fixed, to whom every wish and endeavour tended, is a state of dreary desolation, in which the mind looks abroad impatient of itself, and finds nothing but emptiness and horrour. The blameless life, the artless tenderness, the pious simplicity, the modest resignation, the patient sickness, and the quiet death, are remembered only to add value to the loss, to aggravate regret for what cannot be amended, to deepen sorrow for what cannot be recalled.

These are the calamities by which Providence gradually disengages us from the love of life. Other evils fortitude may repel or hope may mitigate; but irreparable privation leaves nothing to exercise resolution or flatter expectation. The dead cannot return, and nothing is left us here but languishment and grief.

Yet such is the course of nature, that whoever lives long must outlive those whom he loves and honours. Such is the condition of our present existence, that life must one time lose its associations, and every inhabitant of the earth must walk downward to the grave alone and unregarded, without any partner of his joy or grief, without any interested witness of his misfortunes or success.

Misfortune, indeed, he may yet feel; for where is the bottom of the misery of man? But what is success to him that has none to

enjoy it? Happiness is not found in self-contemplation; it is perceived only when it is reflected from another.

We know little of the state of departed souls, because such knowledge is not necessary to a good life. Reason deserts us at the brink of the grave and can give no farther intelligence. Revelation is not wholly silent. "There is joy in the angels of Heaven over one sinner that repenteth"; and surely this joy is not incommunicable to souls disentangled from the body, and made like angels.

Let hope therefore dictate what revelation does not confute, that the union of souls may still remain; and that we who are struggling with sin, sorrow, and infirmities, may have our part in the attention and kindness of those who have finished their course, and are now receiving their reward.

These are the great occasions which force the mind to take refuge in religion: when we have no help in ourselves, what can remain but that we look up to a higher and a greater Power? and to what hope may we not raise our eyes and hearts, when we consider that the greatest Power is the best?

Surely there is no man who, thus afflicted, does not seek succour in the *gospel*, which has brought *life and immortality to light*. The precepts of Epicurus, who teaches us to endure what the laws of the universe make necessary, may silence, but not content us.

On the Death of a Friend

The dictates of Zeno, who commands us to look with indifference on external things, may dispose us to conceal our sorrow, but cannot assuage it. Real alleviation of the loss of friends, and rational tranquillity in the prospect of our own dissolution, can be received only from the promises of Him in whose hands are life and death, and from the assurance of another and a better state, in which all tears will be wiped from the eyes, and the whole soul shall be filled with joy. Philosophy may infuse stubbornness, but Religion only can give patience. I am, &c.*

*This paper was composed by Dr. Johnson upon the occasion of his mother's death.

BOOKS FALL INTO NEGLECT.

No. 59. Saturday, June 2, 1759.

In the common enjoyments of life, we cannot very liberally indulge the present hour, but by anticipating part of the pleasure which might have relieved the tediousness of another day; and any uncommon exertion of strength, or perseverance in labour, is succeeded by a long interval of languor and weariness. Whatever advantage we snatch beyond the certain portion allotted us by nature, is like money spent before it is due, which at the time of regular payment will be missed and regretted.

Fame, like all other things which are supposed to give or to increase happiness, is dispensed with the same equality of distribution. He that is loudly praised will be clamorously censured; he that rises hastily into fame will be in danger of sinking suddenly into oblivion.

Of many writers who filled their age with wonder, and whose names we find celebrated in the books of their contemporaries, the works are now no longer to be seen, or are seen only amidst the lumber of libraries which are seldom visited, where they lie only

to show the deceitfulness of hope, and the uncertainty of honour.

Of the decline of reputation many causes may be assigned. It is commonly lost because it never was deserved; and was conferred at first, not by the suffrage of criticism, but by the fondness of friendship, or servility of flattery. The great and popular are very freely applauded; but all soon grow weary of echoing to each other a name which has no other claim to notice, but that many mouths are pronouncing it at once.

But many have lost the final reward of their labours, because they were too hasty to enjoy it. They have laid hold on recent occurrences, and eminent names, and delighted their readers with allusions and remarks, in which all were interested, and to which all therefore were attentive. But the effect ceased with its cause; the time quickly came when new events drove the former from memory, when the vicissitudes of the world brought new hopes and fears, transferred the love and hatred of the publick to other agents, and the writer, whose works were no longer assisted by gratitude or resentment, was left to the cold regard of idle curiosity.

He that writes upon general principles, or delivers universal truths, may hope to be often read, because his work will be equally useful at all times and in every country; but he cannot expect it to be received with

eagerness, or to spread with rapidity, because desire can have no particular stimulation: that which is to be loved long, must be loved with reason rather than with passion. He that lays out his labours upon temporary subjects, easily finds readers, and quickly loses them; for what should make the book valued when its subject is no more?

These observations will show the reason why the poem of Hudibras is almost forgotten, however embellished with sentiments and diversified with allusions, however bright with wit, and however solid with truth. The hypocrisy which it detected, and the folly which it ridiculed, have long vanished from public notice. Those who had felt the mischief of discord, and the tyranny of usurpation, read it with rapture, for every line brought back to memory something known, and gratified resentment by the just censure of something hated. But the book which was once quoted by princes, and which supplied conversation to all the assemblies of the gay and witty, is now seldom mentioned, and even by those that affect to mention it, is seldom read. So vainly is wit lavished upon fugitive topics, so little can architecture secure duration when the ground is false!

SUFFICIENCY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

No. 91. Saturday, January 12, 1760.

It is common to overlook what is near, by keeping the eye fixed upon something remote. In the same manner present opportunities are neglected, and attainable good is slighted, by minds busied in extensive ranges, and intent upon future advantages. Life, however short, is made still shorter by waste of time, and its progress towards happiness, though naturally slow, is yet retarded by unnecessary labour.

The difficulty of obtaining knowledge is universally confessed. To fix deeply in the mind the principles of science, to settle their limitations, and deduce the long succession of their consequences; to comprehend the whole compass of complicated systems, with all the arguments, objections, and solutions, and to reposite in the intellectual treasury the numberless facts, experiments, apophthegms, and positions, which must stand single in the memory, and of which none has any perceptible connection with the rest, is a task which, though undertaken with ardour and pursued with diligence, must at last be left unfinished by the frailty of our nature.

To make the way to learning either less short or less smooth, is certainly absurd; yet this is the apparent effect of the prejudice which seems to prevail among us in favour of foreign authors, and of the contempt of our native literature, which this excursive curiosity most necessarily produce. Every man is more speedily instructed by his own language, than by any other; before we search the rest of the world for teachers, let us try whether we may not spare our trouble by finding them at home.

The riches of the English language are much greater than they are commonly supposed. Many useful and valuable books lie buried in shops and libraries, unknown and unexamined, unless some lucky compiler opens them by chance, and finds an easy spoil of wit and learning. I am far from intending to insinuate, that other languages are not necessary to him who aspires to eminence, and whose whole life is devoted to study; but to him who reads only for amusement, or whose purpose is not to deck himself with the honours of literature, but to be qualified for domestic usefulness, and sit down content with subordinate reputation, we have authors sufficient to fill up all the vacancies of his time, and gratify most of his wishes for information.

Of our poets I need say little, because they are perhaps the only authors to whom their

country has done justice. We consider the whole succession from Spenser to Pope as superior to any names which the continent can boast; and therefore the poets of other nations, however familiarly they may be sometimes mentioned, are very little read, except by those who design to borrow their beauties.

There is, I think, not one of the liberal arts which may not be competently learned in the English language. He that searches after mathematical knowledge may busy himself among his own countrymen, and will find one or other able to instruct him in every part of those abstruse sciences. He that is delighted with experiments, and wishes to know the nature of bodies from certain and visible effects, is happily placed where the mechanical philosophy was first established by a public institution, and from which it was spread to all other countries.

The more airy and elegant studies of philosophy and criticism have little need of any foreign help. Though our language, not being very analogical, gives few opportunities for grammatical researches, yet we have not wanted authors who have considered the principles of speech; and with critical writings we abound sufficiently to enable pedantry to impose rules which can seldom be observed, and vanity to talk of books which are seldom read.

But our own language has, from the Reformation to the present time, been chiefly dignified and adorned by the works of our divines, who, considered as commentators, controvertists, or preachers, have undoubtedly left all other nations far behind them. No vulgar language can boast such treasures of theological knowledge, or such multitudes of authors at once learned, elegant, and pious. Other countries and other communions have authors perhaps equal in abilities and diligence to ours; but if we unite number with excellence, there is certainly no nation which must not allow us to be superior. Of morality little is necessary to be said, because it is comprehended in practical divinity, and is perhaps better taught in English sermons than in any other books ancient and modern. Nor shall I dwell on our excellence in metaphysical speculations, because he that reads the works of our divines will easily discover how far human subtilty has been able to penetrate.

Political knowledge is forced upon us by the form of our constitution; and all the mysteries of government are discovered in the attack or defence of every minister. The original law of society, the rights of subjects, and the prerogatives of kings, have been considered with the utmost nicety, sometimes profoundly investigated, and sometimes familiarly explained.

Sufficiency of the English Language

Thus copiously instructive is the English language; and thus needless is all recourse to foreign writers. Let us not therefore make our neighbours proud by soliciting help which we do not want, nor discourage our own industry by difficulties which we need not suffer.

The English Dictionary

The English Dictionary.

THE PLAN OF AN ENGLISH DICTIONARY.

To the Right Honourable PHILIP DORMER,
Earl of CHESTERFIELD,
One of His Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State.

MY LORD,

WHEN first I undertook to write an ENGLISH DICTIONARY, I had no expectation of any higher patronage than that of the proprietors of the copy, nor prospect of any other advantage than the price of my labour. I knew that the work in which I engaged is generally considered as drudgery for the blind, as the proper toil of artless industry; a task that requires neither the light of learning, nor the activity of genius, but may be successfully performed without any higher quality than that of bearing burthens with dull patience, and beating the track of the alphabet with sluggish resolution.

Whether this opinion, so long transmitted, and so widely propagated, had its beginning from truth and nature, or from accident and prejudice; whether it be decreed by the authority of reason, or the tyranny of igno-

rance, that of all the candidates for literary praise, the unhappy lexicographer holds the lowest place, neither vanity nor interest incited me to inquire. It appeared that the province allotted me was, of all the regions of learning, generally confessed to be the least delightful, that it was believed to produce neither fruits nor flowers; and that, after a long and laborious cultivation, not even the barren laurel had been found upon it.

Yet on this province, my lord, I entered, with the pleasing hope, that, as it was low, it likewise would be safe. I was drawn forward with the prospect of employment, which, though not splendid, would be useful; and which, though it could not make my life envied, would keep it innocent; which would awaken no passion, engage me in no contention, nor throw in my way any temptation to disturb the quiet of others by censure, or my own by flattery.

I have read indeed of times, in which princes and statesmen thought it part of their honour to promote the improvement of their native tongues; and in which dictionaries were written under the protection of greatness. To the patrons of such undertakings I willingly paid the homage of believing that they, who were thus solicitous for the perpetuity of their language, had reason to expect that their actions would be

celebrated by posterity, and that the eloquence which they promoted would be employed in their praise. But I consider such acts of beneficence as prodigies, recorded rather to raise wonder than expectation; and content with the terms that I had stipulated, had not suffered my imagination to flatter me with any other encouragement, when I found that my design had been thought by your lordship of importance sufficient to attract your favour.

How far this unexpected distinction can be rated among the happy incidents of life, I am not yet able to determine. Its first effect has been to make me anxious, lest it should fix the attention of the publick too much upon me, and, as it once happened to an epick poet of France, by raising the reputation of the attempt, obstruct the reception of the work. I imagine what the world will expect from a scheme, prosecuted under your lordship's influence; and I know that expectation, when her wings are once expanded, easily reaches heights which performance never will attain; and when she has mounted the summit of perfection, derides her followers, who die in the pursuit.

Not therefore to raise expectation, but to repress it, I here lay before your lordship the plan of my undertaking, that more may not be demanded than I intend; and that, before it is too far advanced to be thrown into a

new method, I may be advertised of its defects or superfluities. Such informations I may justly hope, from the emulation with which those, who desire the praise of elegance or discernment, must contend in the promotion of a design that you, my lord, have not thought unworthy to share your attention with treaties and with wars.

In the first attempt to methodise my ideas I found a difficulty, which extended itself to the whole work. It was not easy to determine by what rule of distinction the words of this Dictionary were to be chosen. The chief intent of it is to preserve the purity, and ascertain the meaning of our English idiom; and this seems to require nothing more than that our language be considered, so far as it is our own; that the words and phrases used in the general intercourse of life, or found in the works of those whom we commonly style polite writers, be selected, without including the terms of particular professions: since, with the arts to which they relate, they are generally derived from other nations, and are very often the same in all the languages of this part of the world. This is, perhaps, the exact and pure idea of a grammatical dictionary; but in lexicography, as in other arts, naked science is too delicate for the purposes of life. The value of a work must be estimated by its use: it is not enough that a dictionary delights the

critick, unless, at the same time, it instructs the learner; as it is to little purpose that an engine amuses the philosopher by the subtilty of its mechanism, if it requires so much knowledge in its application as to be of no advantage to the common workman.

The title which I prefix to my work has long conveyed a very miscellaneous idea, and they that take a dictionary into their hands, have been accustomed to expect from it a solution of almost every difficulty. If foreign words therefore were rejected, it could be little regarded, except by criticks, or those who aspire to criticism; and however it might enlighten those that write, would be all darkness to them that only read. The unlearned must oftener consult their dictionaries for the meaning of words, than for their structures or formations; and the words that most want explanation, are generally terms of art; which, therefore, experience has taught my predecessors to spread with a kind of pompous luxuriance over their productions.

The academicians of France, indeed, rejected terms of science in their first essay, but found afterwards a necessity of relaxing the rigour of their determination; and, though they would not naturalise them at once by a single act, permitted them by degrees to settle themselves among the natives, with little opposition; and it would surely be no proof

of judgment to imitate them in an errour which they have now retracted, and deprive the book of its chief use, by scrupulous distinctions.

Of such words, however, all are not equally to be considered as parts of our language; for some of them are naturalised and incorporated, but others still continue aliens, and are rather auxiliaries than subjects. This naturalisation is produced either by an admission into common speech, in some metaphorical signification, which is the acquisition of a kind of property among us; as we say, the *zenith* of advancement, the *meridian* of life, the *cynosure** of neighbouring eyes; or it is the consequence of long intermixture and frequent use, by which the ear is accustomed to the sound of words, till their original is forgotten, as in *equator, satellites;* or of the change of a foreign into an English termination, and a conformity to the laws of the speech into which they are adopted; as in *category, cachexy, peripneumony.*

Of those which still continue in the state of aliens, and have made no approaches towards assimilation, some seem necessary to be retained; because the purchasers of the Dictionary will expect to find them. Such are many words in the common law, as *capias, habeas corpus, præmunire, nisi prius:* such are some terms of controversial divinity, as

*Milton.

hypostasis; and of physick, as the names of diseases; and in general, all terms which can be found in books not written professedly upon particular arts, or can be supposed necessary to those who do not regularly study them. Thus, when a reader not skilled in physick happens in Milton upon this line,

———pining atrophy,
Marasmus, and wide-wasting pestilence,

he will, with equal expectation, look into his dictionary for the word *marasmus*, as for *atrophy*, or *pestilence;* and will have reason to complain if he does not find it.

It seems necessary for the completion of a dictionary designed not merely for criticks, but for popular use, that it should comprise, in some degree, the peculiar words of every profession; that the terms of war and navigation should be inserted, so far as they can be required by readers of travels, and of history; and those of law, merchandise, and mechanical trades, so far as they can be supposed useful in the occurrences of common life.

But there ought, however, to be some distinction made between the different classes of words; and therefore it will be proper to print those which are incorporated into the language in the usual character, and those which are still to be considered as foreign, in the *italick* letter.

Another question may arise with regard to

appellatives, or the names of species. It seems of no great use to set down the words *horse*, *dog*, *cat*, *willow*, *alder*, *daisy*, *rose*, and a thousand others, of which it will be hard to give an explanation, not more obscure than the word itself. Yet it is to be considered, that, if the names of animals be inserted, we must admit those which are more known, as well as those with which we are, by accident, less acquainted; and if they are all rejected, how will the reader be relieved from difficulties produced by allusions to the crocodile, the chameleon, the ichneumon, and the hyæna? If no plants are to be mentioned, the most pleasing part of nature will be excluded, and many beautiful epithets be unexplained. If only those which are less known are to be mentioned, who shall fix the limits of the reader's learning? The importance of such explications appears from the mistakes which the want of them has occasioned. Had Shakespeare had a dictionary of this kind, he had not made the *woodbine* entwine the *honeysuckle;* nor would Milton, with such assistance, have disposed so improperly of his *ellops* and his *scorpion*.

Besides, as such words, like others, require that their accents should be settled, their sounds ascertained, and their etymologies deduced, they cannot be properly omitted in the dictionary. And though the explana-

tions of some may be censured as trivial, because they are almost universally understood; and those of others are unnecessary, because they will seldom occur; yet it seems not proper to omit them, since it is rather to be wished that many readers should find more than he expect, than that one should miss what they might hope to find.

When all the words are selected and arranged, the first part of the work to be considered is the orthography, which was long vague and uncertain; which at last, when its fluctuation ceased, was in many cases settled but by accident; and in which, according to your lordship's observation, there is still great uncertainty among the best criticks: nor is it easy to state a rule by which we may decide between custom and reason, or between the equiponderant authorities of writers alike eminent for judgment and accuracy.

The great orthographical contest has long subsisted between etymology and pronunciation. It has been demanded, on one hand, that men should write as they speak; but as it has been shown that this conformity never was attained in any language, and that it is not more easy to persuade men to agree exactly in speaking than in writing, it may be asked with equal propriety, why men do not rather speak as they write. In France, where this controversy was at its greatest

height, neither party, however ardent, durst adhere steadily to their own rule; the etymologist was often forced to spell with the people; and the advocate for the authority of pronunciation found it sometimes deviating so capriciously from the received use of writing, that he was constrained to comply with the rule of his adversaries, lest he should lose the end by the means, and be left alone by following the crowd.

When a question of orthography is dubious, that practice has, in my opinion, a claim to preference which preserves the greatest number of radical letters, or seems most to comply with the general custom of our language. But the chief rule which I propose to follow is, to make no innovation, without a reason sufficient to balance the inconvenience of change; and such reasons I do not expect often to find. All change is of itself an evil, which ought not to be hazarded but for evident advantage; and as inconstancy is in every case a mark of weakness, it will add nothing to the reputation of our tongue. There are, indeed, some who despise the inconveniences of confusion, who seem to take pleasure in departing from custom, and to think alteration desirable for its own sake; and the reformation of our orthography, which these writers have attempted, should not pass without its due honours, but that I suppose they hold a singularity its own re-

ward, or may dread the fascination of lavish praise.

The present usage of spelling, where the present usage can be distinguished, will therefore, in this work, be generally followed; yet there will be often occasion to observe, that it is in itself inaccurate, and tolerated rather than chosen; particularly when, by a change of one letter, or more, the meaning of a word is obscured; as in *farrier*, or *ferrier*, as it was formerly written from *ferrum*, or *fer;* in *gibberish*, for *gebrish*, the jargon of *Geber*, and his chymical followers, understood by none but their own tribe. It will be likewise sometimes proper to trace back the orthography of different ages, and shew by what gradations the word departed from its original.

Closely connected with orthography is pronunciation, the stability of which is of great importance to the duration of a language, because the first change will naturally begin by corruptions in the living speech. The want of certain rules for the pronunciation of former ages, has made us wholly ignorant of the metrical art of our ancient poets; and since those who study their sentiments regret the loss of their numbers, it is surely time to provide that the harmony of the moderns may be more permanent.

A new pronunciation will make almost a new speech, and therefore, since one great

end of this undertaking is to fix the English language, care will be taken to determine the accentuation of all polysyllables by proper authorities, as it is one of those capricious phænomena which cannot be easily reduced to rules. Thus there is no antecedent reason for difference of accent in the words *dolorous* and *sonorous;* yet of the one Milton gives the sound in this line:

He pass'd o'er many a region dolorous;

and that of the other in this,

Sonorous metal blowing martial sounds.

It may likewise be proper to remark metrical licences, such as contractions, *generous, gen'rous; reverend, rev'rend;* and coalitions, as *region, question.*

* * * * *

With regard to questions of purity or propriety, I was once in doubt whether I should not attribute too much to myself, in attempting to decide them, and whether my province was to extend beyond the proposition of the question, and the display of the suffrages on each side; but I have been since determined, by your lordship's opinion, to interpose my own judgment, and shall therefore endeavour to support what appears to me most consonant to grammar and reason. Ausonius thought that modesty forbade him to plead

inability for a task to which Cæsar had judged him equal.

Cur me posse negem, posse quod ille putat?

And I may hope, my lord, that since you, whose authority in our language is so generally acknowledged, have commissioned me to declare my own opinion, I shall be considered as exercising a kind of vicarious jurisdiction, and that the power which might have been denied to my own claim, will be readily allowed me as the delegate of your lordship.

In citing authorities, on which the credit of every part of this work must depend, it will be proper to observe some obvious rules; such as of preferring writers of the first reputation to those of an inferiour rank; of noting the quotations with accuracy; and of selecting, when it can be conveniently done, such sentences, as, besides their immediate use, may give pleasure or instruction, by conveying some elegance of language, or some precept of prudence, or piety.

It has been asked, on some occasions, who shall judge the judges? And since, with regard to this design, a question may arise by what authority the authorities are selected, it is necessary to obviate it, by declaring that many of the writers whose testimonies will be alleged, were selected by Mr. Pope; of whom I may be justified in affirming, that

were he still alive, solicitous as he was for the success of this work, he would not be displeased that I have undertaken it.

It will be proper that the quotations be ranged according to the ages of their authours; and it will afford an agreeable amusement, if to the words and phrases which are not of our own growth, the name of the writer who first introduced them can be affixed; and if to words which are now antiquated, the authority be subjoined of him who last admitted them. Thus, for *scathe* and *buxom*, now obsolete, Milton may be cited,

——The mountain oak
Stands *scath'd* to heaven———
——He with broad sails
Winnow'd the *buxom* air———

By this method every word will have its history, and the reader will be informed of the gradual changes of the language, and have before his eyes the rise of some words, and the fall of others. But observations so minute and accurate are to be desired, rather than expected; and if use be carefully supplied, curiosity must sometimes bear its disappointments.

This, my lord, is my idea of an English Dictionary; a dictionary by which the pronunciation of our language may be fixed, and its attainment facilitated; by which its purity may be preserved, its use ascertained,

and its duration lengthened. And though, perhaps, to correct the language of nations by books of grammar, and amend their manners by discourses of morality, may be tasks equally difficult; yet, as it is unavoidable to wish, it is natural likewise to hope, that your lordship's patronage may not be wholly lost; that it may contribute to the preservation of ancient, and the improvement of modern writers; that it may promote the reformation of those translators, who, for want of understanding the characteristical difference of tongues, have formed a chaotic dialect of heterogeneous phrases; and awaken to the care of purer diction some men of genius, whose attention to argument makes them negligent of style, or whose rapid imagination, like the Peruvian torrents, when it brings down gold, mingles it with sand.

When I survey the plan which I have laid before you, I cannot, my lord, but confess, that I am frighted at its extent, and, like the soldiers of Cæsar, look on Britain as a new world, which it is almost madness to invade. But I hope, that though I should not complete the conquest, I shall at least discover the coast, civilise part of the inhabitants, and make it easy for some other adventurer to proceed farther, to reduce them wholly to subjection, and settle them under laws.

We are taught by the great Roman orator, that every man should propose to himself the highest degree of excellence, but that he may stop with honour at the second or third: though therefore my performance should fall below the excellence of other dictionaries, I may obtain, at least, the praise of having endeavoured well; nor shall I think it any reproach to my diligence, that I have retired without a triumph, from a contest with united academies, and long successions of learned compilers. I cannot hope, in the warmest moments, to preserve so much caution through so long a work, as not often to sink into negligence, or to obtain so much knowledge of all its parts as not frequently to fail by ignorance. I expect that sometimes the desire of accuracy will urge me to superfluities, and sometimes the fear of prolixity betray me to omissions: that in the extent of such variety, I shall be often bewildered; and in the mazes of such intricacy, be frequently entangled: that in one part refinement will be subtilised beyond exactness, and evidence dilated in another beyond perspicuity. Yet I do not despair of approbation from those who, knowing the uncertainty of conjecture, the scantiness of knowledge, the fallibility of memory, and the unsteadiness of attention, can compare the causes of errour with the means of avoiding it, and the extent of art with the capacity of

man; and whatever be the event of my endeavours, I shall not easily regret an attempt which has procured me the honour of appearing thus publickly,

My lord,

Your lordship's most obedient,
and most humble servant,
SAM. JOHNSON.

LETTER TO LORD CHESTERFIELD.

[In the course of the winter preceding this grand publication (The English Dictionary), the late earl of Chesterfield gave two essays in the periodical paper, called "The World," dated November 28, and December 5, 1754, to prepare the public for so important a work. The original plan, addressed to his lordship in the year 1747, is there mentioned in terms of the highest praise; and this was understood, at the time, to be a courtly way of soliciting a dedication of the Dictionary to himself. Johnson treated this civility with disdain. He said to Garrick and others, "I have sailed a long and painful voyage round the world of the English language; and does he now send out two cockboats to tow me into harbour?" He had said in the last number of the Rambler, "that, having laboured to maintain the dignity of virtue, I will not now degrade it by the meanness of dedication." Such a man when he had finished his Dictionary, "not," as he says himself, "in the soft obscurities of retirement, or under the shelter of academic bowers, but amidst inconveniences and distraction, in sickness and in sorrow, and without the patronage of the great," was not likely to be caught by the lure thrown out by lord Chesterfield. He had in vain sought the patronage of that nobleman; and his pride, exasperated by disappointments, drew from him the following letter, dated in the month of February 1755.—Murphy's Essay on Dr. Johnson.]

To the Right Honourable the Earl of CHESTERFIELD.

MY LORD,

I have been lately informed, by the pro-

prietors of the World, that two papers, in which my Dictionary is recommended to the public, were written by your lordship. To be so distinguished is an honour which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

When upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address, and could not forbear to wish, that I might boast myself *le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre;* that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending. But I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your lordship in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing, which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

Seven years, my lord, have now passed since I waited in your outward room, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of

favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before.

The Shepherd in Virgil grew acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received; or to be unwilling that the publick should consider me as owing that to a patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed, though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most humble
and most obedient servant,
SAMUEL JOHNSON."

PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH DICTIONARY.

[The following paragraphs form the close of the Preface to the first edition of the Dictionary.]

Of the event of this work, for which, having laboured it with so much application, I cannot but have some degree of parental fondness, it is natural to form conjectures. Those who have been persuaded to think well of my design, will require that it should fix our language, and put a stop to those alterations which time and chance have hitherto been suffered to make in it without opposition. With this consequence I will confess that I flattered myself for a while; but now begin to fear that I have indulged expectation which neither reason nor experience can justify. When we see men grow old and die at a certain time one after another, from century to century, we laugh at the elixir that promises to prolong life to a thousand years; and with equal justice may the lexicographer be derided, who being able to produce no example of a nation that has preserved their words and phrases from mutability, shall imagine that his dictionary can embalm his language, and secure it from corruption and decay, that it is in his power to

change sublunary nature, and clear the world at once from folly, vanity, and affectation.

With this hope, however, academies have been instituted, to guard the avenues of their languages, to retain fugitives, and repulse intruders; but their vigilance and activity have hitherto been vain; sounds are too volatile and subtile for legal restraints; to enchain syllables, and to lash the wind, are equally the undertakings of pride, unwilling to measure its desires by its strength. The French language has visibly changed under the inspection of the Academy; the style of Amelot's translation of Father Paul is observed by Le Courayer to be *un peu passé;* and no Italian will maintain, that the diction of any modern writer is not perceptibly different from that of Boccace, Machiavel, or Caro.

Total and sudden transformations of a language seldom happen; conquests and migrations are now very rare: but there are other causes of change, which, though slow in their operation, and invisible in their progress, are perhaps as much superior to human resistance, as the revolutions of the sky, or intumescence of the tide. Commerce, however necessary, however lucrative, as it depraves the manners, corrupts the language; they that have frequent intercourse with strangers, to whom they endeavour to accommodate themselves, must in time learn

a mingled dialect, like the jargon which serves the traffickers on the Mediterranean and Indian coasts. This will not always be confined to the exchange, the warehouse, or the port, but will be communicated by degrees to other ranks of the people, and be at last incorporated with the current speech.

There are likewise internal causes equally forcible. The language most likely to continue long without alteration, would be that of a nation raised a little, and but a little, above barbarity, secluded from strangers, and totally employed in procuring the conveniences of life; either without books, or, like some of the Mahometan countries, with very few: men thus busied and unlearned, having only such words as common use requires, would perhaps long continue to express the same notions by the same signs. But no such constancy can be expected in a people polished by arts, and classed by subordination, where one part of the community is sustained and accommodated by the labour of the other. Those who have much leisure to think, will always be enlarging the stock of ideas; and every increase of knowledge, whether real or fancied, will produce new words, or combination of words. When the mind is unchained from necessity, it will range after convenience; when it is left at large in the fields of speculation, it will shift opinions; as any custom is disused,

the words that expressed it must perish with it; as any opinion grows popular, it will innovate speech in the same proportion as it alters practice.

As by the cultivation of various sciences a language is amplified, it will be more furnished with words deflected from their original sense; the geometrician will talk of a courtier's zenith, or the eccentric virtue of a wild hero, and the physician of sanguine expectations and phlegmatic delays. Copiousness of speech will give opportunities to capricious choice, by which some words will be preferred, and others degraded: vicissitudes of fashion will enforce the use of new, or extend the signification of known terms. The tropes of poetry will make hourly encroachments, and the metaphorical will become the current sense; pronunciation will be varied by levity or ignorance, and the pen must at length comply with the tongue; illiterate writers will, at one time or other, by public infatuation, rise into renown, who not knowing the original import of words, will use them with colloquial licentiousness, confound distinction, and forget propriety. As politeness increases, some expressions will be considered as too gross and vulgar for the delicate, others as too formal and ceremonious for the gay and airy; new phrases are therefore adopted, which must for the same reasons be in time dismissed. Swift, in

his petty treatise on the English language, allows that new words must sometimes be introduced, but proposes that none should be suffered to become obsolete. But what makes a word obsolete, more than general agreement to forbear it? and how shall it be continued, when it conveys an offensive idea, or recalled again into the mouths of mankind, when it has once become unfamiliar by disuse, and unpleasing by unfamiliarity?

There is another cause of alteration more prevalent than any other, which yet in the present state of the world cannot be obviated. A mixture of two languages will produce a third distinct from both, and they will always be mixed, where the chief parts of education, and the most conspicuous accomplishment, is skill in ancient or in foreign tongues. He that has long cultivated another language, will find its words and combinations crowd upon his memory; and haste and negligence, refinement and affectation, will obtrude borrowed terms and exotick expressions.

The great pest of speech is frequency of translation. No book was ever turned from one language into another, without imparting something of its native idiom; this is the most mischievous and comprehensive innovation; single words may enter by thousands, and the fabrick of the tongue continue the same; but new phraseology changes

much at once; it alters not the single stones of the building, but the order of the columns. If an academy should be established for the cultivation of our style; which I, who can never wish to see dependence multiplied, hope the spirit of English liberty will hinder or destroy, let them, instead of compiling grammars and dictionaries, endeavour, with all their influence, to stop the licence of translators, whose idleness and ignorance, if it be suffered to proceed, will reduce us to babble a dialect of France.

If the changes that we fear be thus irresistible, what remains but to acquiesce with silence, as in the other insurmountable distresses of humanity? It remains that we retard what we cannot repel, that we palliate what we cannot cure. Life may be lengthened by care, though death cannot be ultimately defeated: tongues, like governments, have a natural tendency to degeneration; we have long preserved our constitution, let us make some struggles for our language.

In hope of giving longevity to that which its own nature forbids to be immortal, I have devoted this book, the labour of years, to the honour of my country, that we may no longer yield the palm of philology, without a contest, to the nations of the continent. The chief glory of every people arises from its authours: whether I shall add anything by my own writings to the reputation of Eng-

lish literature, must be left to time: much of my life has been lost under the pressure of disease; much has been trifled away; and much has always been spent in provision for the day that was passing over me; but I shall not think my employment useless or ignoble, if by my assistance foreign nations, and distant ages, gain access to the propagators of knowledge, and understand the teachers of truth; if my labours afford light to the repositories of science, and add celebrity to Bacon, to Hooker, to Milton, and to Boyle.

When I am animated by this wish, I look with pleasure on my book, however defective, and deliver it to the world with the spirit of a man that has endeavoured well. That it will immediately become popular I have not promised to myself: a few wild blunders, and risible absurdities, from which no work of such multiplicity was ever free, may for a time furnish folly with laughter, and harden ignorance into contempt; but useful diligence will at last prevail, and there never can be wanting some who distinguish desert; who will consider that no dictionary of a living tongue ever can be perfect, since, while it is hastening to publication, some words are budding, and some falling away; that a whole life cannot be spent upon syntax and etymology, and that even a whole life would not be sufficient; that he, whose

design includes whatever language can express, must often speak of what he does not understand; that a writer will sometimes be hurried by eagerness to the end, and sometimes faint with weariness under a task, which Scaliger compares to the labours of the anvil and the mine; that what is obvious is not always known, and what is known is not always present; that sudden fits of inadvertency will surprise vigilance, slight avocations will seduce attention, and casual eclipses of the mind will darken learning; and that the writer shall often in vain trace his memory at the moment of need, for that which yesterday he knew with intuitive readiness, and which will come uncalled into his thoughts to-morrow.

In this work, when it shall be found that much is omitted, let it not be forgotten that much likewise is performed; and though no book was ever spared out of tenderness to the authour, and the world is little solicitous to know whence proceed the faults of that which it condemns; yet it may gratify curiosity to inform it, that the "English Dictionary" was written with little assistance of the learned, and without any patronage of the great; not in the soft obscurities of retirement, or under the shelter of academic bowers, but amidst inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and in sorrow. It may repress the triumph of malignant criticism to

observe, that if our language is not here fully displayed, I have only failed in an attempt which no human powers have hitherto completed. If the lexicons of ancient tongues, now immutably fixed, and comprised in a few volumes, be yet, after the toil of successive ages, inadequate and delusive; if the aggregated knowledge, and co-operating diligence of the Italian academicians, did not secure them from the censure of Beni; if the embodied critics of France, when fifty years had been spent upon their work, were obliged to change its economy, and give their second edition another form, I may surely be contented without the praise of perfection, which, if I could obtain, in this gloom of solitude, what would it avail me? I have protracted my work till most of those whom I wished to please have sunk into the grave, and success and miscarriage are empty sounds: I therefore dismiss it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise.

Lives of the Poets

MILTON AS A SCHOOLMASTER.

He now hired a lodging at the house of one Russel, a taylor in St. Bride's Churchyard, and undertook the education of John and Edward Philips, his sister's sons. Finding his rooms too little, he took a house and garden in Aldersgate-street, which was not then so much out of the world as it is now; and chose his dwelling at the upper end of a passage, that he might avoid the noise of the street. Here he received more boys, to be boarded and instructed.

Let not our veneration for Milton forbid us to look with some degree of merriment on great promises and small performance, on the man who hastens home, because his countrymen are contending for their liberty, and when he reaches the scene of action, vapours away his patriotism in a private boarding-school. This is the period of his life from which all his biographers seem inclined to shrink. They are unwilling that Milton should be degraded to a schoolmaster; but, since it cannot be denied that he taught boys, one finds out that he taught for nothing, and another, that his motive was only

zeal for the propagation of learning and virtue; and all tell what they do not know to be true, only to excuse an act which no wise man will consider as in itself disgraceful. His father was alive; his allowance was not ample; and he supplied its deficiencies by an honest and useful employment.

It is told, that in the art of education he performed wonders; and a formidable list is given of the authours, Greek and Latin, that were read in Aldersgate-street by youth between ten and fifteen or sixteen years of age. Those who tell or receive these stories should consider, that nobody can be taught faster than he can learn. The speed of the horseman must be limited by the power of the horse. Every man, that has ever undertaken to instruct others, can tell what slow advances he has been able to make, and how much patience it requires to recall vagrant inattention, to stimulate sluggish indifference, and to rectify absurd misapprehension.

The purpose of Milton, as it seems, was to teach something more solid than the common literature of schools, by reading those authours that treat of physical subjects; such as the georgick, and astronomical treatises of the ancients. This was a scheme of improvement which seems to have busied many literary projectors of that age. Cowley, who had more means than Milton of knowing what was wanting to the embel-

lishments of life, formed the same plan of education in his imaginary college.

But the truth is, that the knowledge of external nature, and the sciences which that knowledge requires or includes, are not the great or the frequent business of the human mind. Whether we provide for action or conversation, whether we wish to be useful or pleasing, the first requisite is the religious and moral knowledge of right and wrong; the next is an acquaintance with the history of mankind, and with those examples which may be said to embody truth, and prove by events the reasonableness of opinions. Prudence and justice are virtues and excellencies of all times and of all places; we are perpetually moralists, but we are geometricians only by chance. Our intercourse with intellectual nature is necessary; our speculations upon matter are voluntary, and at leisure. Physiological learning is of such rare emergence, that one may know another half his life, without being able to estimate his skill in hydrostaticks or astronomy; but his moral and prudential character immediately appears.

Those authours, therefore, are to be read at schools that supply most axioms of prudence, most principles of moral truth, and most materials for conversation; and these purposes are best served by poets, orators, and historians.

Let me not be censured for this digression as pedantick or paradoxical; for, if I have Milton against me, I have Socrates on my side. It was his labour to turn philosophy from the study of nature to speculations upon life; but the innovators whom I oppose are turning off attention from life to nature. They seem to think, that we are placed here to watch the growth of plants, or the motions of the stars. Socrates was rather of opinion, that what we had to learn was, how to do good, and avoid evil:

Ὅττι τοι μεγάροισι κακόντ' ἀγαθόντε τέτυκται.

Of institutions we may judge by their effects. From this wonder-working academy I do not know that there ever proceeded any man very eminent for knowledge: its only genuine product, I believe is a small History of Poetry, written in Latin, by his nephew Philips, of which perhaps none of my readers has ever heard.*

That in his school, as in every thing else which he undertook, he laboured with great

* Johnson did not here allude to Philips's Theatrum Poetarum, as has been ignorantly supposed, but (as he himself informed Mr. Malone) to another work by the same author, intituled, "Tractatulus de Carmine Dramatico Poetarum Veterum præsertim in Choris Tragicis et veteris Comediæ. Cui subjungitur compendiosa enumeratio poetarum (saltum quorum fama maxime enituit) qui a tempore Dantis Aligerii usque ad hanc ætatem claruerunt," &c.—J. B.

diligence, there is no reason for doubting. One part of his method deserves general imitation. He was careful to instruct his scholars in religion. Every Sunday was spent upon theology; of which he dictated a short system, gathered from the writers that were then fashionable in the Dutch universities.

He set his pupils an example of hard study and spare diet; only now and then he allowed himself to pass a day of festivity and indulgence with some gay gentlemen of Gray's Inn.

THE COMPOSITION OF "PARADISE LOST."

He was now busied by "Paradise Lost." Whence he drew the original design has been variously conjectured by men who cannot bear to think themselves ignorant of that which, at last, neither diligence nor sagacity can discover. Some find the hint in an Italian tragedy. Voltaire tells a wild and unauthorized story of a farce seen by Milton in Italy, which opened thus: *Let the rainbow be the fiddlestick of the fiddle of heaven.* It has been already shown, that the first conception was of a tragedy or mystery, not of a narrative, but a dramatick work, which he is supposed to have begun to reduce to its present form about the time (1665) when he finished his dispute with the defenders of the king.

He long before had promised to adorn his native country by some great performance, while he had yet perhaps no settled design, and was stimulated only by such expectations as naturally arose from the survey of his attainments, and the consciousness of his powers. What he should undertake, it was difficult to determine. He was *long chusing, and began late.*

While he was obliged to divide his time be-

tween his private studies and affairs of state, his poetical labour must have been often interrupted; and perhaps he did little more in that busy time than construct the narrative, adjust the episodes, proportion the parts, accumulate images and sentiments, and treasure in his memory, or preserve in writing, such hints as books or meditation would supply. Nothing particular is known of his intellectual operations while he was a statesman; for, having every help and accommodation at hand, he hath no need of uncommon expedients.

Being driven from all publick stations, he is yet too great not to be traced by curiosity to his retirement; where he has been found by Mr. Richardson, the fondest of his admirers, sitting "before his door in a grey coat of coarse cloth, in warm sultry weather, to enjoy the fresh air; and so, as well as in his own room, receiving the visits of the people of distinguished parts as well as quality." His visitors of high quality must now be imagined to be few; but men of parts might reasonably court the conversation of a man so generally illustrious, that foreigners are reported by Wood to have visited the house in Bread-street, where he was born.

According to another account, he was seen in a small house, "neatly enough dressed in black clothes, sitting in a room hung with rusty green; pale but not cadaverous, with

chalkstones in his hand. He said, that, if it were not for the gout, his blindness would be tolerable."

In the intervals of his pain, being made unable to use the common exercises, he used to swing in a chair, and sometimes played upon an organ.

He was now confessedly and visibly employed upon his poem, of which the progress might be noted by those with whom he was familiar; for he was obliged, when he had composed as many lines as his memory would conveniently retain, to employ some friend in writing them, having, at least for part of the time, no regular attendant. This gave opportunity to observations and reports.

Mr. Philips observes, that there was a very remarkable circumstance in the composure of Paradise Lost, "which I have a particular reason," says he, "to remember; for whereas I had the perusal of it from the very beginning, for some years, as I went from time to time to visit him, in parcels of ten, twenty, or thirty verses at a time (which, being written by whatever hand came next, might possibly want correction as to the orthography and pointing), having, as the summer came on, not been showed any for a considerable while, and desiring the reason thereof, was answered, that his vein never happily flowed but from the autumnal equi-

nox to the vernal; and that whatever he attempted at other times was never to his satisfaction, though he courted his fancy never so much; so that, in all the years he was about this poem, he may be said to have spent half his time therein."

Upon this relation Toland remarks, that in his opinion Philips has mistaken the time of the year; for Milton, in his Elegies, declares, that with the advance of the spring he feels the increase of his poetical force, *redeunt in carmina vires*. To this it is answered, that Philips could hardly mistake time so well marked; and it may be added, that Milton might find different times of the year favourable to different parts of life. Mr. Richardson conceives it impossible that "such a work should be suspended for six months, or for one. It may go on faster or slower, but it must go on." By what necessity it must continually go on, or why it might not be laid aside and resumed, it is not easy to discover.

This dependance of the soul upon the seasons, those temporary and periodical ebbs and flows of intellect, may, I suppose, justly be derided as the fumes of vain imagination. *Sapiens dominabitur astris*. The authour that thinks himself weather-bound will find, with a little help from hellebore, that he is only idle or exhausted. But while this notion has possession of the head, it produces

the inability which it supposes. Our powers owe much of their energy to our hopes: *possunt quia posse videntur.* When success seems attainable, diligence is enforced; but when it is admitted that the faculties are suppressed by a cross wind, or a cloudy sky, the day is given up without resistance; for who can contend with the course of Nature?

From such prepossessions Milton seems not to have been free. There prevailed in his time an opinion, that the world was in its decay, and that we have had the misfortune to be produced in the decrepitude of Nature. It was suspected that the whole creation languished, that neither trees nor animals had the height or bulk of their predecessors, and that every thing was daily sinking by gradual diminution. Milton appears to suspect that souls partake of the general degeneracy, and is not without some fear that his book is to be written in an *age too late* for heroick poesy.

Another opinion wanders about the world, and sometimes finds reception among wise men; an opinion that restrains the operations of the mind to particular regions, and supposes that a luckless mortal may be born in a degree of latitude too high or too low for wisdom or for wit. From this fancy, wild as it is, he had not wholly cleared his head, when he feared lest the *climate* of his

country might be *too cold* for flights of imagination.

Into a mind already occupied by such fancies, another not more reasonable might easily find its way. He that could fear lest his genius had fallen upon too old a world, or too chill a climate, might consistently magnify to himself the influence of the seasons, and believe his faculties to be vigorous only half the year.

His submission to the seasons was at least more reasonable than his dread of decaying nature, or a frigid zone; for general causes must operate uniformly in a general abatement of mental power; if less could be performed by the writer, less likewise would content the judges of his work. Among this lagging race of frosty grovellers he might still have risen into eminence by producing something which *they should not willingly let die*. However inferiour to the heroes who were born in better ages, he might still be great among his contemporaries, with the hope of growing every day greater in the dwindle of posterity. He might still be a giant among the pygmies, the one-eyed monarch of the blind.

Of his artifices of study, or particular hours of composition, we have little account, and there was perhaps little to be told. Richardson, who seems to have been very diligent in his inquiries, but discovers always

a wish to find Milton discriminated from other men, relates, that "he would sometimes lie awake whole nights, but not a verse could he make; and on a sudden his poetical faculty would rush upon him with an *impetus* or *æstrum*, and his daughter was immediately called to secure what came. At other times he would dictate perhaps forty lines in a breath, and then reduce them to half the number."

These bursts of light, and involutions of darkness, these transient and involuntary excursions and retrocessions of invention, having some appearance of deviation from the common train of Nature, are eagerly caught by the lovers of a wonder. Yet something of this inequality happens to every man in every mode of exertion, manual or mental. The mechanic cannot handle his hammer and his file at all times with equal dexterity; there are hours, he knows not why, when *his hand is out*. By Mr. Richardson's relation, casually conveyed, much regard cannot be claimed. That, in his intellectual hour, Milton called for his daughter to *secure what came*, may be questioned; for unluckily it happens to be known that his daughters were never taught to write; nor would he have been obliged, as is universally confessed, to have employed any casual visitor in disburthening his memory, if his daughter could have performed the office.

The story of reducing his exuberance has been told of other authours, and, though doubtless true of every fertile and copious mind, seems to have been gratuitously transferred to Milton.

What he has told us, and we cannot now know more, is, that he composed much of this poem in the night and morning, I suppose before his mind was disturbed with common business; and that he poured out with great fluency his *unpremeditated verse*. Versification, free, like his, from the distresses of rhyme, must, by a work so long, be made prompt and habitual; and, when his thoughts were once adjusted, the words would come at his command.

At what particular times of his life the parts of his work were written, cannot often be known. The beginning of the third book shows that he had lost his sight; and the Introduction to the seventh, that the return of the king had clouded him with discountenance: and that he was offended by the licentious festivity of the Restoration. There are no other internal notes of his time. Milton, being now cleared from all effects of his disloyalty, had nothing required from him but the common duty of living in quiet, to be rewarded with the common right of protection; but this, which, when he sculked from the approach of his king, was perhaps more than he hoped, seems not to have

satisfied him; for no sooner is he safe, than he finds himself in danger, *fallen on evil days and evil tongues, and with darkness and with danger compass'd round.* This darkness, had his eyes been better employed, had undoubtedly deserved compassion; but to add the mention of danger was ungrateful and unjust. He was fallen indeed on *evil days;* the time was come in which regicides could no longer boast their wickedness. But of evil tongues for Milton to complain, required impudence at least equal to his other powers; Milton, whose warmest advocates must allow, that he never spared any asperity of reproach or brutality of insolence.

But the charge itself seems to be false; for it would be hard to recollect any reproach cast upon him either serious or ludicrous, through the whole remaining part of his life. He pursued his studies, or his amusements, without persecution, molestation, or insult. Such is the reverence paid to great abilities, however misused: they who contemplated in Milton the scholar and the wit, were contented to forget the reviler of his king.

When the plague (1665) raged in London, Milton took refuge at Chalfont, in Bucks; where Elwood, who had taken the house for him, first saw a complete copy of Paradise Lost, and, having perused it, said to him, "Thou hast said a great deal upon *Paradise*

Lost; what hast thou to say upon *Paradise Found?*"

Next year, when the danger of infection had ceased, he returned to Bunhill-fields, and designed the publication of his poem. A licence was necessary, and he could expect no great kindness from a chaplain of the archbishop of Canterbury. He seems, however, to have been treated with tenderness; for though objections were made to particular passages, and among them to the simile of the sun eclipsed in the first book, yet the licence was granted; and he sold his copy, April 27, 1667, to Samuel Simmons, for an immediate payment of five pounds, with a stipulation to receive five pounds more when thirteen hundred should be sold of the first edition; and again, five pounds after the sale of the same number of the second edition; and another five pounds after the same sale of the third. None of the three editions were to be extended beyond fifteen hundred copies.

The first edition was of ten books, in a small quarto. The titles were varied from year to year; and an advertisement and the arguments of the books were omitted in some copies, and inserted in others.

The sale gave him in two years a right to his second payment, for which the receipt was signed April 26, 1669. The second edition was not given till 1674; it was printed in small octavo; and the number of books

was increased to twelve, by a division of the seventh and twelfth; and some other small improvements were made. The third edition was published in 1678; and the widow, to whom the copy was then to devolve, sold all her claims to Simmons for eight pounds, according to her receipt given Dec. 21, 1680. Simmons had already agreed to transfer the whole right to Brabazon Aylmer for twenty-five pounds; and Aylmer sold to Jacob Tonson half, August 17, 1683, and half, March 24, 1690, at a price considerably enlarged. In the history of "Paradise Lost" a deduction thus minute will rather gratify than fatigue.

The slow sale and tardy reputation of this poem have been always mentioned as evidences of neglected merit, and of the uncertainty of literary fame; and inquiries have been made, and conjectures offered, about the causes of its long obscurity and late reception. But has the case been truly stated? Have not lamentation and wonder been lavished on an evil that was never felt?

That in the reigns of Charles and James the "Paradise Lost" received no public acclamations, is readily confessed. Wit and literature were on the side of the court: and who that solicited favour or fashion would venture to praise the defender of the regicides? All that he himself could think his due, from *evil tongues* in *evil days*, was that

reverential silence which was generously preserved. But it cannot be inferred, that this poem was not read, or not, however unwillingly, admired.

The sale, if it be considered, will justify the publick. Those who have no power to judge of past times by their own, should always doubt their conclusions. The call for books was not in Milton's age what it is in the present. To read was not then a general amusement; neither traders, nor often gentlemen, thought themselves disgraced by ignorance. The women had not then aspired to literature, nor was every house supplied with a closet of knowledge. Those, indeed, who professed learning, were not less learned than at any other time; but of that middle race of students who read for pleasure or accomplishment, and who buy the numerous products of modern typography, the number was then comparatively small. To prove the paucity of readers, it may be sufficient to remark, that the nation had been satisfied from 1623 to 1664, that is, forty-one years, with only two editions of the works of Shakspeare, which probably did not together make one thousand copies.

The sale of thirteen hundred copies in two years, in opposition to so much recent enmity, and to a style of versification new to all, and disgusting to many, was an uncommon example of the prevalence of genius.

The demand did not immediately increase; for many more readers than were supplied at first the nation did not afford. Only three thousand were sold in eleven years; for it forced its way without assistance; its admirers did not dare to publish their opinion; and the opportunities now given of attracting notice by advertisements were then very few; the means of proclaiming the publication of new books have been produced by that general literature which now pervades the nation through all its ranks.

But the reputation and price of the copy still advanced, till the Revolution put an end to the secrecy of love, and "Paradise Lost" broke into open view with sufficient security of kind reception.

Fancy can hardly forbear to conjecture with what temper Milton surveyed the silent progress of his work, and marked its reputation stealing its way in a kind of subterraneous current through fear and silence. I cannot but conceive him calm and confident, little disappointed, not at all dejected, relying on his own merit with steady consciousness, and waiting without impatience the vicissitudes of opinion, and the impartiality of a future generation.

MILTON'S RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL OPINIONS.

His theological opinions are said to have been first Calvinistical; and afterwards, perhaps when he began to hate the Presbyterians, to have tended towards Arminianism. In the mixed questions of theology and government, he never thinks that he can recede far enough from popery, or prelacy; but what Baudius says of Erasmus seems applicable to him, *magis habuit quod fugeret, quam quod sequeretur.* He had determined rather what to condemn, than what to approve. He has not associated himself with any denomination of Protestants; we know rather what he was not, than what he was. He was not of the Church of Rome; he was not of the Church of England.

To be of no Church is dangerous. Religion, of which the rewards are distant, and which is animated only by Faith and Hope, will glide by degrees out of the mind, unless it be invigorated and reimpressed by external ordinances, by stated calls to worship, and the salutary influence of example. Milton, who appears to have had full conviction of the truth of Christianity, and to have regarded the Holy Scriptures with the profoundest

veneration, to have been untainted by any heretical peculiarity of opinion, and to have lived in a confirmed belief of the immediate and occasional agency of Providence, yet grew old without any visible worship. In the distribution of his hours, there was no hour of prayer, either solitary or with his household; omitting publick prayers, he omitted all.

Of this omission the reason has been sought upon a supposition which ought never to be made, that men live with their own approbation, and justify their conduct to themselves. Prayer certainly was not thought superfluous by him, who represents our first parents as praying acceptably in the state of innocence, and efficaciously after their fall. That he lived without prayer can hardly be affirmed; his studies and meditations were an habitual prayer. The neglect of it in his family was probably a fault, for which he condemned himself, and which he intended to correct, but that death, as too often happens, intercepted his reformation.

His political notions were those of an acrimonious and surly republican, for which it is not known that he gave any better reason than that *a popular government was the most frugal; for the trappings of a monarchy would set up an ordinary commonwealth.* It is surely very shallow policy that supposes money to be the chief good:

and even this, without considering that the support and expense of a court is, for the most part, only a particular kind of traffick, by which money is circulated, without any national impoverishment.

Milton's republicanism was, I am afraid, founded in an envious hatred of greatness, and a sullen desire of independence; in petulance impatient of control, and pride disdainful of superiority. He hated monarchs in the State, and prelates in the Church; for he hated all whom he was required to obey. It is to be suspected, that his predominant desire was to destroy rather than to establish, and that he felt not so much the love of liberty as repugnance to authority.

It has been observed, that they who most loudly clamour for liberty do not most liberally grant it. What we know of Milton's character, in domestick relations, is, that he was severe and arbitrary. His family consisted of women; and there appears in his books something like a Turkish contempt of females, as subordinate and inferior beings. That his own daughters might not break the ranks, he suffered them to be depressed by a mean and penurious education. He thought women made only for obedience, and man only for rebellion.

ADDISON AS A CRITIC.

ADDISON is now to be considered as a critic; a name which the present generation is scarcely willing to allow him. His criticism is condemned as tentative or experimental, rather than scientific; and he is considered as deciding by taste rather than by principles.

It is not uncommon for those who have grown wise by the labour of others, to add a little of their own, and overlook their masters. Addison is now despised by some who perhaps would never have seen his defects, but by the lights which he afforded them. That he always wrote as he would think it necessary to write now, cannot be affirmed; his instructions were such as the character of his readers made proper. That general knowledge which now circulates in common talk, was in his time rarely to be found. Men not professing learning were not ashamed of ignorance; and in the female world, any acquaintance with books was distinguished only to be censured. His purpose was to infuse literary curiosity, by gentle and unsuspected conveyance, into the gay, the idle, and the wealthy; he therefore presented knowledge in the most alluring form, not lofty and austere, but accessible

and familiar. When he shewed them their defects, he showed them likewise that they might be easily supplied. His attempt succeeded; inquiry was awakened, and comprehension expanded. An emulation of intellectual elegance was excited, and from his time, to our own, life has been gradually exalted, and conversation purified and enlarged.

Dryden had, not many years before, scattered criticism over his prefaces with very little parsimony; but, though he sometimes condescended to be somewhat familiar, his manner was in general too scholastic for those who had yet their rudiments to learn, and found it not easy to understand their master. His observations were framed rather for those that were learning to write, than for those that read only to talk.

An instructor like Addison was now wanting, whose remarks being superficial, might be easily understood, and being just, might prepare the mind for more attainments. Had he presented *Paradise Lost* to the publick with all the pomp of system and severity of science, the criticism would perhaps have been admired, and the poem still have been neglected; but by the blandishments of gentleness and facility he has made Milton an universal favourite, with whom readers of every class think it necessary to be pleased.

He descended now and then to lower dis-

quisitions; and by a serious display of the beauties of "Chevy-Chase" exposed himself to the ridicule of Wagstaff, who bestowed a like pompous character on "Tom Thumb;" and to the contempt of Dennis, who, considering the fundamental position of his criticism, that "Chevy-Chase" pleases, and ought to please, because it is natural, observes, "that there is a way of deviating from nature by bombast or tumour, which soars above nature, and enlarges images beyond their real bulk; by affectation, which forsakes nature in quest of something unsuitable; and by imbecility, which degrades nature by faintness and diminution, by obscuring its appearances, and weakening its effects." In "Chevy-Chase" there is not much of either bombast or affectation; but there is chill and lifeless imbecility. The story cannot possibly be told in a manner that shall make less impression on the mind.

Before the profound observers of the present race repose too securely on the consciousness of their superiority to Addison, let them consider his Remarks on Ovid, in which may be found specimens of criticism sufficiently subtile and refined: let them peruse likewise his Essays on Wit, and on the Pleasures of Imagination, in which he founds art on the base of nature, and draws the principles of invention from dispositions in-

herent in the mind of man with skill and elegance, such as his contemners will not easily attain.

As a describer of life and manners, he must be allowed to stand perhaps the first of the first rank. His humour, which as Steele observes, is peculiar to himself, is so happily diffused as to give the grace of novelty to domestick scenes and daily occurrences. He never "outsteps the modesty of nature," nor raises merriment or wonder by the violation of truth. His figures never divert by distortion, nor amaze by aggravation. He copies life with so much fidelity, that he can be hardly said to invent; yet his exhibitions have an air so much original, that it is difficult to suppose them not merely the product of imagination.

As a teacher of wisdom, he may be confidentially followed. His religion has nothing in it enthusiastic or superstitious: he appears neither weakly credulous, nor wantonly sceptical; his morality is neither dangerously lax, nor impracticably rigid. All the enchantment of fancy, and all the cogency of argument, are employed to recommend to the reader his real interest, the care of pleasing the authour of his being. Truth is shewn sometimes as the phantom of a vision; sometimes appears half-veiled in an allegory: sometimes attracts regard in the robes of fancy, and sometimes steps forth in the con-

fidence of reason. She wears a thousand dresses, and in all is pleasing.

"Mille habet ornatus, mille decenter habet."

His prose is the model of the middle style; on grave subjects not formal, on light occasions not grovelling, pure without scrupulosity, and exact without apparent elaboration; always equable, and always easy, without glowing words or pointed sentences. Addison never deviates from his track to snatch a grace; he seeks no ambitious ornaments, and tries no hazardous innovations. His page is always luminous, but never blazes in unexpected splendour.

It was apparently his principal endeavour to avoid all harshness and severity of diction; he is therefore sometimes verbose in his transitions and connections, and sometimes descends too much to the language of conversation; yet if his language had been less idiomatical, it might have lost somewhat of its genuine Anglicism. What he attempted, he performed; he is never feeble, and he did not wish to be energetic; he is never rapid, and he never stagnates. His sentences have neither studied amplitude, nor affected brevity: his periods, though not diligently rounded, are voluble and easy. Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison.

POPE AND DRYDEN COMPARED.

He professed to have learned his poetry from Dryden, whom, whenever an opportunity was presented, he praised through his whole life with unvaried liberality; and perhaps his character may receive some illustration, if he be compared with his master.

Integrity of understanding and nicety of discernment were not allotted in a less proportion to Dryden than to Pope. The rectitude of Dryden's mind was sufficiently shown by the dismission of his poetical prejudices, and the rejection of unnatural thoughts and rugged numbers. But Dryden never desired to apply all the judgment that he had. He wrote, and professed to write, merely for the people; and when he pleased others, he contented himself. He spent no time in struggles to rouse latent powers; he never attempted to make that better which was already good, nor often to mend what he must have known to be faulty. He wrote, as he tells us, with very little consideration; when occasion or necessity called upon him, he poured out what the present moment happened to supply, and, when once it had passed the press, ejected it from his mind; for, when he had no pecuniary interest, he had no further solicitude.

Pope was not content to satisfy; he desired to excel, and therefore always endeavoured to do his best: he did court the candour, but dared the judgment of his reader, and, expecting no indulgence from others, he shewed none to himself. He examined lines and words with minute and punctilious observation, and retouched every part with indefatigable diligence, till he had left nothing to be forgiven.

For this reason he kept his pieces very long in his hands, while he considered and reconsidered them. The only poems which can be supposed to have been written with such regard to the times as might hasten their publication, were the two satires of "Thirty-eight;" of which Dodsley told me, that they were brought to him by the authour, that they might be fairly copied. "Almost every line," he said, "was then written twice over; I gave him a clean transcript, which he sent some time afterwards, to me for the press, with almost every line written twice over a second time."

His declaration, that his care for his works ceased at their publication, was not strictly true. His parental attention never abandoned them; what he found amiss in the first edition, he silently corrected in those that followed. He appears to have revised the "Iliad," and freed it from some of its imperfections; and the "Essay on Criticism"

received many improvements after its first appearance. It will seldom be found that he altered without adding clearness, elegance, or vigour. Pope had perhaps the judgment of Dryden; but Dryden certainly wanted the diligence of Pope.

In acquired knowledge, the superiority must be allowed to Dryden, whose education was more scholastick, and who before he became an authour had been allowed more time for study, with better means of information. His mind has a larger range, and he collects his images and illustrations from a more extensive circumference of science. Dryden knew more of man in his general nature, and Pope in his local manners. The notions of Dryden were formed by comprehensive speculation, and those of Pope by minute attention. There is more dignity in the knowledge of Dryden, and more certainty in that of Pope.

Poetry was not the sole praise of either: for both excelled likewise in prose; but Pope did not borrow his prose from his predecessor. The style of Dryden is capricious and varied; that of Pope is cautious and uniform. Dryden obeys the motions of his own mind; Pope constrains his mind to his own rules of composition. Dryden is sometimes vehement and rapid; Pope is always smooth, uniform, and gentle. Dryden's page is a natural field, rising into inequalities, and diversified by the varied exuberance of abundant vegetation;

Pope's is a velvet lawn, shaven by the scythe, and levelled by the roller.

Of genius, that power which constitutes a poet; that quality without which judgment is cold, and knowledge is inert; that energy which collects, combines, amplifies, and animates; the superiority must, with some hesitation, be allowed to Dryden. It is not to be inferred, that of this poetical vigour Pope had only a little, because Dryden had more; for every other writer since Milton must give place to Pope; and even of Dryden it must be said, that, if he has brighter paragraphs, he has not better poems. Dryden's performances were always hasty, either excited by some external occasion, or extorted by domestic necessity; he composed without consideration, and published without correction. What his mind could supply at call, or gather in one excursion, was all that he sought, and all that he gave. The dilatory caution of Pope enabled him to condense his sentiments, to multiply his images, and to accumulate all that study might produce, or chance might supply. If the flights of Dryden therefore are higher, Pope continues longer on the wing. If of Dryden's fire the blaze is brighter, of Pope's the heat is more regular and constant. Dryden often surpasses expectation, and Pope never falls below it. Dryden is read with frequent astonishment, and Pope with perpetual delight.

Prayers and Meditations

Prayers and Meditations.

[During many years of his life, he statedly observed certain days* with a religious solemnity; on which, and other occasions, it was his custom to compose suitable Prayers and Meditations; committing them to writing for his own use, and, as he assured me, without any view to their publication. But being last summer on a visit at Oxford to the reverend Dr. Adams, and that gentleman urging him repeatedly to engage in some work of this kind, he then first conceived a design to revise these pious effusions, and bequeath them with enlargements, to the use and benefit of others.

Infirmities, however, now growing fast upon him, he at length changed his design, and determined to give the manuscripts, without revision, in charge to me, as I had long shared his intimacy, and was at this time his daily attendant. Accordingly, one morning, on my visiting him by desire at an early hour, he put these papers into my hands, with instructions for committing them to the press, and with a promise to prepare a sketch of his own life to accompany them. But the performance of this promise also was prevented, partly by his hasty destruction of some private memoirs, which he afterwards lamented, and partly by that incurable sickness, which soon ended in his dissolution.—*Rev. George Strahan.*]

*Viz., New-Year's Day; March 28, the day on which his wife, Mrs. Elizabeth Johnson, died; Good Friday; Easter-Day; and September the 18th, his own birthday.

1738.

On My Birth-Day.

September $\frac{7}{18}$.

O God, the Creator and Preserver of all mankind, Father of all mercies, I, thine unworthy servant, do give Thee most humble thanks, for all thy goodness and loving kindness to me. I bless Thee for my creation, preservation, and redemption, for the knowledge of thy Son Jesus Christ, for the means of grace and the hope of glory. In the days of childhood and youth, in the midst of weakness, blindness, and danger, Thou hast protected me; amidst afflictions of mind, body, and estate, Thou hast supported me; and amidst vanity and wickedness. Thou hast spared me. Grant, O merciful Father, that I may have a lively sense of thy mercies. Create in me a contrite heart, that I may worthily lament my sins and acknowledge my wickedness, and obtain remission and forgiveness, through the satisfaction of Jesus Christ. And, O Lord, enable me, by thy grace, to redeem the time which I have spent in sloth, vanity, and wickedness; to make use of thy gifts to the honour of thy name; to lead a new life in thy faith, fear, and love; and finally to obtain everlasting life. Grant this, Almighty Lord, for the merits and through

the mediation of our most holy and blessed Saviour Jesus Christ; to whom, with Thee and the Holy Ghost, Three Persons and One God, be all honor and glory, world without end. Amen.

Transcribed, June 26, 1768.

This is the first solemn prayer, of which I have a copy.

Whether I composed any before this, I question.

Prayer on the Rambler.

ALMIGHTY GOD, the giver of all good things, without whose help all labour is ineffectual, and without whose grace all wisdom is folly; grant, I beseech Thee, that in this my undertaking, thy Holy Spirit may not be withheld from me, but that I may promote thy glory, and the salvation both of myself and others; grant this, O Lord, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

1752.

Prayers composed by me on the Death of my Wife, and reposited among her Memorials, May 8, 1752.*

Deus exaudi,——Heu!

April 24, 1752.

ALMIGHTY and most merciful Father, who

*[Viz., the four following prayers.]

lovest those whom Thou punishest, and turnest away thy anger from the penitent, look down with pity upon my sorrows, and grant that the affliction which it has pleased Thee to bring upon me, may awaken my conscience, enforce my resolutions of a better life, and impress upon me such conviction of thy power and goodness, that I may place in Thee my only felicity, and endeavour to please Thee in all my thoughts, words, and actions. Grant, O Lord, that I may not languish in fruitless and unavailing sorrow, but that I may consider from whose hand all good and evil is received, and may remember that I am punished for my sins, and hope for comfort only by repentance. Grant, O merciful God, that by the assistance of thy Holy Spirit I may repent, and be comforted, obtain that peace which the world cannot give, pass the residue of my life in humble resignation and cheerful obedience; and when it shall please Thee to call me from this mortal state, resign myself into thy hands with faith and confidence, and finally obtain mercy and everlasting happiness, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

April 25, 1752.

O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and most merciful God, in whose hands are

life and death, who givest and takest away, castest down and raisest up, look with mercy on the affliction of thy unworthy servant, turn away thine anger from me, and speak peace to my troubled soul. Grant me the assistance and comfort of thy Holy Spirit, that I may remember with thankfulness the blessings so long enjoyed by me in the society of my departed wife; make me so to think on her precepts and example, that I may imitate whatever was in her life acceptable in thy sight, and avoid all by which she offended Thee. Forgive me, O merciful Lord, all my sins, and enable me to begin and perfect that reformation which I promised her, and to persevere in that resolution, which she implored Thee to continue, in the purposes which I recorded in thy sight, when she lay dead before me, in obedience to thy laws, and faith in thy word. And now, O Lord, release me from my sorrow, fill me with just hopes, true faith, and holy consolations, and enable me to do my duty in that state of life to which Thou hast been pleased to call me, without disturbance from fruitless grief, or tumultuous imaginations; that in all my thoughts, words, and actions, I may glorify thy Holy Name, and finally obtain, what I hope Thou hast granted to thy departed servant, everlasting joy and felicity, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

May 6, 1752.

O Lord, our heavenly Father, without whom all purposes are frustrate, all efforts are vain, grant me the assistance of thy Holy Spirit, that I may not sorrow as one without hope, but may now return to the duties of my present state with humble confidence in thy protection, and so govern my thoughts and actions, that neither business may withdraw my mind from Thee, nor idleness lay me open to vain imaginations; that neither praise may fill me with pride, nor censure with discontent; but that in the changes of this life, I may fix my heart upon the reward which Thou hast promised to them that serve Thee, and that whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever are pure, whatever are lovely, whatever are of good report, wherein there is virtue, wherein there is praise, I may think upon and do, and obtain mercy and everlasting happiness. Grant this, O Lord, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our Father, &c.—The grace, &c.

May 6. I used this service, written April 24, 25, May 6, as preparatory to my return to life to-morrow.

Μακάριοι οἱ νεκροὶ οἱ ἐν Κυρίῳ ἀποθνήσκοντες ἀπάρτι.—Apoc. xiv. 13.

Before any new Study.

November.

Almighty God, in whose hands are all the powers of man; who givest understanding, and takest it away; who, as it seemeth good unto Thee, enlightenest the thoughts of the simple, and darkenest the meditations of the wise, be present with me in my studies and inquiries.

Grant, O Lord, that I may not lavish away the life which Thou hast given me on useless trifles, nor waste it in vain searches after things which Thou hast hidden from me.

Enable me, by thy Holy Spirit, so to shun sloth and negligence, that every day may discharge part of the task which Thou hast allotted me; and so further with thy help that labour which, without thy help, must be ineffectual, that I may obtain, in all my undertakings, such success as will most promote thy glory, and the salvation of my own soul, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

———

When my Eye was restored to its Use.

February 15, 1756.

Almighty God, who hast restored light to my eye, and enabled me to pursue again the

studies which Thou hast set before me; teach me, by the diminution of my sight, to remember that whatever I possess is thy gift, and by its recovery, to hope for thy mercy: and, O Lord, take not thy Holy Spirit from me; but grant that I may use thy bounties according to thy will, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

1759.

Jan. 23.

The day on which my dear Mother was Buried.

(Repeated on my fast, with the addition.)

Almighty God, merciful Father, in whose hands are life and death, sanctify unto me the sorrow which I now feel. Forgive whatever I have done unkindly to my mother, and whatever I have omitted to do kindly. Make me to remember her good precepts and good example, and to reform my life according to thy holy word, that I may lose no more opportunities of good. I am sorrowful, O Lord; let not my sorrow be without fruit. Let it be followed by holy resolutions, and lasting amendment, that when I shall die like my mother, I may be received to everlasting life.

I commend, O Lord, so far as it may be lawful, into thy hands, the soul of my de-

parted mother, beseeching Thee to grant her whatever is most beneficial to her in her present state.

O Lord, grant me thy Holy Spirit, and have mercy upon me for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

And, O Lord, grant unto me that am now about to return to the common comforts and business of the world, such moderation in all enjoyments, such diligence in honest labour, and such purity of mind that, amidst the changes, miseries, or pleasures of life, I may keep my mind fixed upon Thee, and improve every day in grace, till I shall be received into thy kingdom of eternal happiness.

I returned thanks for my mother's good example, and implored pardon for neglecting it.

I returned thanks for the alleviation of my sorrow.

The dream of my brother I shall remember.

———

1760.

Sept. 18.

Resolved, D[eo] J[uvante],

To combat notions of obligation.

To apply to study.

To reclaim imaginations.

To consult the resolves on Tetty's coffin.

To rise early.

To study religion.

To go to church.
To drink less strong liquors.
To keep a journal.
To oppose laziness, by doing what is to be done to-morrow.
Rise as early as I can.
Send for books for Hist. of War.
Put books in order.
Scheme of life.

O Almighty God, merciful Father, who hast continued my life to another year, grant that I may spend the time which Thou shalt yet give me in such obedience to thy word and will, that, finally, I may obtain everlasting life. Grant that I may repent and forsake my sins before the miseries of age fall upon me; and that while my strength yet remains, I may use it to thy glory and my own salvation, by the assistance of thy Holy Spirit, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

1761.

Easter Eve.

Since the communion of last Easter, I have led a life so dissipated and useless, and my terrours and perplexities have so much increased, that I am under great depression and discouragement; yet I purpose to present myself before God to-morrow, with humble hope that He will not break the bruised reed.

"Come unto me all ye that travail."

I have resolved, I hope not presumptuously, till I am afraid to resolve again. Yet, hoping in God, I steadfastly purpose to lead a new life. O God, enable me, for Jesus Christ's sake!

My purpose is,

To avoid idleness.

To regulate my sleep as to length and choice of hours.

To set down every day what shall be done the day following.

To keep a journal.

To worship God more diligently.

To go to church every Sunday.

To study the Scriptures.

To read a certain portion every week.

1762.

March 28.

God grant that I may, from this day,

Return to my studies.

Labour diligently.

Rise early.

Live temperately.

Read the Bible.

Go to church.

1764.

Good Friday.

April 20, 1764.

I HAVE made no reformation; I have lived totally useless, more sensual in thought, and more addicted to wine and meat. Grant me, O God, to amend my life, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

I hope to put my rooms in order.*

I fasted all day.

—

April 21, 1764, 3 in the morning.

My indolence, since my last reception of the Sacrament, has sunk into grosser sluggishness, and my dissipation spread into wilder negligence. My thoughts have been clouded with sensuality; and, except that from the beginning of this year I have in some measure forborne excess of strong drink, my appetites have predominated over my reason. A kind of strange oblivion has overspread me, so that I know not what has become of the last year; and perceive that incidents and intelligence pass over me without leaving any impression.

This is not the life to which heaven is promised. I purpose to approach the altar

*Disorder I have found one great cause of idleness.

again to-morrow. Grant, O Lord, that I may receive the Sacrament with such resolutions of a better life as may by thy grace be effectual, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

—

April 21. I read the whole Gospel of St. John. Then sat up till the 22d.

My purpose is from this time,

To reject or expel sensual images, and idle thoughts.

To provide some useful amusement for leisure time.

To avoid idleness.

To rise early.

To study a proper portion of every day.

To worship God diligently.

To read the Scriptures.

To let no week pass without reading some part.

To write down my observations.

I will renew my resolutions made at Tetty's death.

I perceive an insensibility and heaviness upon me. I am less than commonly oppressed with the sense of sin, and less affected with the shame of idleness. Yet I will not despair. I will pray to God for resolution, and will endeavour to strengthen my faith in Christ by commemorating his death.

I prayed for Tett.

Sept. 18, 1764, about 6 evening.

THIS is my fifty-sixth birth-day, the day on which I have concluded fifty-five years.

I have outlived many friends. I have felt many sorrows. I have made few improvements. Since my resolution formed last Easter, I have made no advancement in knowledge or in goodness; nor do I recollect that I have endeavoured it. I am dejected, but not hopeless.

O God, for Jesus Christ's sake, have mercy upon me.

—

7 in the evening.

I went to church, prayed *to be loosed from the chain of my sins.*

I have now spent fifty-five years in resolving; having from the earliest time almost that I can remember, been forming schemes of a better life. I have done nothing; the need of doing therefore is pressing, since the time of doing is short. O God, grant me to resolve aright, and to keep my resolutions, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

"Hæc limina vitæ."—STAT.

I resolve,

To study the Scriptures; I hope, in the original languages. Six hundred and forty verses every Sunday, will nearly comprise the Scriptures in a year.

To read good books; to study theology.

To treasure in my mind passages for recollection.

To rise early; not later than six, if I can; I hope sooner, but as soon as I can.

To keep a journal, both of employment and of expenses. To keep accounts.

To take care of my health, by such means as I have designed.

To set down at night some plan for the morrow.

Last year I prayed on my birth-day, by accommodating the Morning Collect for grace, putting *year* for *day*. This I did this day.

—

Sept. 18, 1764.

O God, heavenly Father, who desirest not the death of a sinner, grant that I may turn from my wickedness and live. Enable me to shake off all impediments of lawful action, and so to order my life, that increase of days may produce increase of grace, of tranquillity of thought, and vigour in duty. Grant that my resolves may be effectual to a holy life, and a happy death, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

To-morrow I purpose to regulate my room.

1765.

Easter Day.

April 7, about 3 in the morning.

I PURPOSE again to partake of the blessed Sacrament; yet when I consider how vainly I have hitherto resolved, at this annual commemoration of my Saviour's death, to regulate my life by his laws, I am almost afraid to renew my resolutions. Since the last Easter I have reformed no evil habit, my time has been unprofitably spent and seems as a dream that has left nothing behind. My memory grows confused, and I know not how the days pass over me.

Good Lord, deliver me.

I will call upon God to-morrow for repentance and amendment. O heavenly Father, let not my call be vain, but grant me to desire what may please Thee; and fulfil those desires for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

My resolutions, which God perfect, are,

1. To avoid loose thoughts.
2. To rise at eight every morning.

I hope to extend these purposes to other duties; but it is necessary to combat evil habits singly. I purpose to rise at eight, because, though I shall not yet rise early, it will be much earlier than I now rise, for I

often lie till two, and will gain me much time, and tend to a conquest over idleness, and give time for other duties. I hope to rise yet earlier.

1769.

January 1.

I AM now about to begin another year; how the last has past, it would be in my state of weakness, perhaps not prudent too solicitously to recollect. God will, I hope, turn my sufferings to my benefit, forgive me whatever I have done amiss, and having vouchsafed me great relief, will by degrees heal and restore both my mind and body; and permit me, when the last year of my life shall come, to leave the world in holiness and tranquillity.

I am not yet in a state to form many resolutions; I purpose, and hope to rise early in the morning, at eight, and by degrees at six; eight being the latest hour to which bed-time can be properly extended; and six the earliest that the present system of life requires.

September 18, 1769.

THIS day completes the sixtieth year of my age. What I have done, and what I have left undone, the unsettled state of my mind makes all endeavours to think improper. I hope to survey my life with more tranquillity,

in some part of the time which God shall grant me.

The last year has been wholly spent in a slow progress of recovery. My days are easier, but the perturbation of my nights is very distressful. I think to try a lower diet. I have grown fat too fast. My lungs seem encumbered, and my breath fails me, if my strength is in any unusual degree exerted, or my motion accelerated. I seem to myself to bear exercise with more difficulty than in the last winter. But though I feel all those decays of body, I have made no preparation for the grave. What shall I do to be saved?

———

Wednesday, March 28, 1770.

This is the day on which, in 1752, I was deprived of poor dear Tetty. Having left off the practice of thinking on her with some particular combinations, I have recalled her to my mind of late less frequently; but when I recollect the time in which we lived together, my grief for her departure is not abated; and I have less pleasure in any good that befalls me, because she does not partake it. On many occasions, I think what she would have said or done. When I saw the sea at Brighthelmstone, I wished for her to have seen it with me. But with respect to her, no rational wish is now left, but that

we may meet at last where the mercy of God shall make us happy, and perhaps make us instrumental to the happiness of each other. It is now eighteen years.

Easter Eve.

April 18, 1772.

I AM now again preparing, by divine mercy, to commemorate the death of my gracious Redeemer, and to form, as God shall enable me, resolutions and purposes of a better life.

When I review the last year, I am able to recollect so little done, that shame and sorrow, though perhaps too weakly, come upon me; yet I have been generally free from local pain, and my strength has seemed gradually to increase. But my sleep has generally been unquiet, and I have not been able to rise early. My mind is unsettled, and my memory confused. I have of late turned my thoughts, with a very useless earnestness, upon past incidents. I have yet got no command over my thoughts; an unpleasing incident is almost certain to hinder my rest; this is the remainder of my last illness. By sleepless or unquiet nights, and short days, made short by late rising, the time passes away uncounted and unheeded. Life so spent is useless.

I hope to cast my time into some stated method.

To let no hour pass unemployed.

To rise by degrees more early in the morning.

To keep a journal.

I have, I think, been less guilty of neglecting publick worship than formerly. I have commonly on Sunday gone once to church, and if I have missed, have reproached myself.

I have exerted rather more activity of body. These dispositions I desire to improve.

I resolved, last Easter, to read within the year, the whole Bible, a very great part of which I had never looked upon. I read the Greek Testament without construing, and this day concluded the Apocalypse. I think that no part was missed.

My purpose of reading the rest of the Bible was forgotten, till I took by chance the resolutions of last Easter in my hand.

I began at the first day of Lent; and, for a time, read with some regularity. I was then disturbed or seduced, but finished the Old Testament last Thursday.

I hope to read the whole Bible once a year, as long as I live.

Yesterday I fasted, as I have always or commonly done since the death of Tetty.

I devoted this week to the perusal of the

Bible, and have done little secular business. I am this night easier than is customary on this anniversary, but am not sensibly enlightened.

1774.

Jan. 1, near 2 in the morning.

Almighty God, merciful Father, who hatest nothing that Thou hast made, but wouldest that all should be saved, have mercy upon me. As Thou hast extended my life, increase my strength, direct my purposes, and confirm my resolution, that I may truly serve Thee, and perform the duties which Thou shalt allot me.

Relieve, O gracious Lord, according to thy mercy, the pains and distempers of my body, and appease the tumults of my mind. Let my faith and obedience increase as my life advances; and let the approach of death incite my desire to please Thee, and invigorate my diligence in good works, till at last, when Thou shalt call me to another state, I shall lie down in humble hope, supported by thy Holy Spirit, and be received to everlasting happiness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The beginning, &c.

I hope,

To read the Gospels before Easter.

To rise at eight.

To be temperate in food.

January 9, 1774.

This year has passed with so little improvement, that I doubt whether I have not rather impaired than increased my learning. To this omission, some external causes have contributed. In the winter I was distressed by a cough; in the summer an inflammation fell upon my useful eye, from which it has not yet, I fear, recovered; in the autumn I took a journey to the Hebrides, but my mind was not free from perturbation: yet the chief cause of my deficiency has been a life immethodical and unsettled, which breaks all purposes, confounds and suppresses memory, and perhaps leaves too much leisure to imagination. O Lord, have mercy upon me.

1775.

Maunday Thursday, April 13.

Of the use of time, or of my commendation of myself, I thought no more; but lost life in restless nights and broken days, till this week awakened my attention.

This year has passed with very little improvement, perhaps with diminution of knowledge. Much time I have not left; infirmities oppress me. But much remains to be done. I hope to rise at eight, or sooner in the morning.

Good Friday, April 14, 1775.

Boswell came in before I was up. We breakfasted; I only drank tea, without milk or bread. We went to church, saw Dr. Wetherel in the pew, and, by his desire, took him home with us. He did not go very soon, and Boswell staid. Boswell and I went to church, but came very late. We then took tea, by Boswell's desire; and I eat one bun, I think, that I might not seem to fast ostentatiously. Boswell sat with me till night; we had some serious talk. When he went, I gave Francis some directions for preparation to communicate. Thus has passed, hitherto, this awful day.

—

10°.30′ P. M.

When I look back upon resolutions of improvement and amendment, which have year after year been made and broken, either by negligence, forgetfulness, vicious idleness, casual interruption, or morbid infirmity; when I find that so much of my life has stolen unprofitably away, and that I can descry by retrospection scarcely a few single days properly and vigorously employed; why do I yet try to resolve again? I try, because reformation is necessary, and despair is criminal; I try, in humble hope of the help of God.

As my life has, from my earliest years, been

wasted in a morning bed, my purpose is from Easter-day to rise early, not later than eight.

———

1776.

Easter Day.

April 7.

THE time is again at which, since the death of my poor dear Tetty, on whom God have mercy, I have annually commemorated the mystery of Redemption, and annually purposed to amend my life. My reigning sin, to which perhaps many others are appendant, is waste of time, and general sluggishness, to which I was always inclined, and, in part of my life, have been almost compelled by morbid melancholy and disturbance of mind. Melancholy has had in me its paroxysms and remissions, but I have not improved the intervals, nor sufficiently resisted my natural inclination, or sickly habits. I will resolve, henceforth, to rise at eight in the morning, so far as resolution is proper, and will pray that God will strengthen me. I have begun this morning.

Though for the past week I have had an anxious design of communicating to-day, I performed no particular act of devotion, till on Friday I went to church. My design was to pass part of the day in exercises of piety, but Mr. Boswell interrupted me; of him, how-

ever, I could have rid myself, but poor Thrale, *orbus et exspes* came for comfort, and sat till seven, when we all went to church.

In the morning I had at church some radiations of comfort.

I fasted, though less rigorously than at other times. I, by negligence, poured milk into the tea, and, in the afternoon, drank one dish of coffee with Thrale; yet at night, after a fit of drowsiness, I felt myself very much disordered by emptiness, and called for tea, with peevish and impatient eagerness. My distress was very great.

Yesterday, I do not recollect that to go to church came into my thoughts; but I sat in my chamber, preparing for preparation: interrupted, I know not how. I was near two hours at dinner.

I go now with hope,

To rise in the morning at eight.

To use my remaining time with diligence.

To study more accurately the Christian Religion.

1777.

29, Easter Eve.

I ROSE, and again prayed, with reference to my departed wife. I neither read nor went to church, yet can scarcely tell how I have been hindered. I treated with booksellers on a bargain, but the time was not long.

30, Easter Day, 1mâ mane.

THE day is now come again, in which, by a custom since the death of my wife I have by the divine assistance always observed, I am to renew the great covenant with my Maker and my Judge. I humbly hope to perform it better. I hope for more efficacy of resolution, and more diligence of endeavour. When I survey my past life, I discover nothing but a barren waste of time, with some disorders of body, and disturbances of the mind very near to madness, which I hope He that made me, will suffer to extenuate many faults, and excuse many deficiencies. Yet much remains to be repented and reformed. I hope that I refer more to God than in former times, and consider more what submission is due to his dispensations. But I have very little reformed my practical life; and the time in which I can struggle with habits cannot be now expected to be long. Grant, O God, that I may no longer resolve in vain, or dream away the life which thy indulgence gives me, in vacancy and uselessness.

———

Monday, April 20, 1778.

AFTER a good night, as I am forced to reckon, I rose seasonably, and prayed, using the Collect for yesterday.

In reviewing my time from Easter 1777, I

found a very melancholy and shameful blank. So little has been done, that days and months are without any trace. My health has, indeed, been very much interrupted. My nights have been commonly, not only restless, but painful and fatiguing. My respiration was once so difficult, that an asthma was suspected. I could not walk, but with great difficulty, from Stowhill to Greenhill. Some relaxation of my breast has been procured, I think, by opium, which, though it never gives me sleep, frees my breast from spasms.

I have written a little of the Lives of the Poets. I think with all my usual vigour. I have made sermons, perhaps as readily as formerly. My memory is less faithful in retaining names, and I am afraid in retaining occurrences. Of this vacillation and vagrancy of mind, I impute a great part to a fortuitous and unsettled life, and therefore purpose to spend my time with more method.

This year, the 28th of March, passed away without memorial. Poor Tetty, whatever were our faults and failings, we loved each other. I did not forget thee yesterday. Couldest thou have lived!——

I am now, with the help of God, to begin a new life.

1779.

Jan. 1, being 1 in the morning.

ALMIGHTY God, merciful Father, who hast granted to me the beginning of another year, grant that I may employ thy gifts to thy glory, and my own salvation. Excite me to amend my life, give me good resolutions, and enable me to perform them. As I approach the grave, let my faith be invigorated, my hope exalted, and my charity enlarged. Take not from me thy Holy Spirit, but in the course of my life preserve me, in the hour of death sustain me, and finally receive me to everlasting happiness, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Good Friday.

April 2.

AFTER a night restless and oppressive, I rose this morning somewhat earlier than usual, and having taken tea, which was very necessary to compose the disorder in my breast, having eaten nothing, I went to church with Boswell. We came late; I was able to attend the Litany with little perturbation. When we came home I began the First to the Thess., having prayed by the Collect for the right use of the Scriptures. I gave Boswell *Les Pensées de Pascal*, that he might not in-

terrupt me. I did not, I believe, read very diligently; and before I had read far, we went to church again; I was again attentive. At home I read again, then drank tea, with a bun and an half, thinking myself less able to fast than at former times; and then concluded the Epistle. Being much oppressed with drowsiness, I slept about an hour by the fire.

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11 P.M.

I am now to review the last year, and find little but dismal vacuity, neither business nor pleasure; much intended, and little done. My health is much broken; my nights afford me little rest. I have tried opium, but its help is counterbalanced with great disturbance; it prevents the spasms, but it hinders sleep. O God, have mercy on me.

Last week I published [the first part of] the Lives of the Poets, written, I hope, in such a manner as may tend to the promotion of piety.

In this last year I have made little acquisition; I have scarcely read any thing. I maintain Mrs. —— and her daughter. Other good of myself I know not where to find, except a little charity.

But I am now in my seventieth year; what can be done, ought not to be delayed.

Easter Eve.

April 3, 1779, 11 P.M.

THIS is the time of my annual review, and annual resolution. The review is comfortless, little done. Part of the Life of Dryden and the Life of Milton have been written; but my mind has neither been improved nor enlarged. I have read little, almost nothing. And I am not conscious that I have gained any good, or quitted any evil habits.

Of resolutions I have made so many, with so little effect, that I am almost weary, but by the help of God, am not yet hopeless. Good resolutions must be made and kept. I am almost seventy years old, and have no time to lose. The distressful restlessness of my nights, makes it difficult to settle the course of my days. Something, however, let me do.

———

Sept. 18, 1780.

I AM now beginning the seventy-second year of my life, with more strength of body and greater vigour of mind than I think is common at that age. But though the convulsions in my breast are relieved, my sleep is seldom long. My nights are wakeful, and therefore I am sometimes sleepy in the day. I have been attentive to my diet, and have diminished the bulk of my body. I have not

at all studied nor written diligently. I have Swift and Pope yet to write; Swift is just begun.

I have forgotten or neglected my resolutions or purposes, which I now humbly and timorously renew. Surely I shall not spend my whole life with my own total disapprobation. Perhaps God may grant me now to begin a wiser and a better life.

Jan. 2, 1781.

I ROSE according to my resolution, and am now to begin another year; I hope with amendment of life. I will not despair. Help me, help me, O my God.

My hope is,

To rise at eight or sooner.

To read the Bible through this year, in some language.

To keep a journal.

To study religion.

To avoid idleness.

Good Friday.

Jan. 13, 1781.

I FORGOT my prayer and resolutions, till two days ago I found this paper.

Some time in March I finished the Lives of the Poets, which I wrote in my usual way, dilatorily and hastily, unwilling to work, and working with vigour and haste.

On Wednesday 11, was buried my dear friend Thrale, who died on Wednesday 4; and with him were buried many of my hopes and pleasures. About five, I think, on Wednesday morning he expired; I felt almost the last flutter of his pulse, and looked for the last time upon the face that for fifteen years had never been turned upon me but with respect or benignity. Farewell. May God, that delighteth in mercy, have had mercy on thee.

I had constantly prayed for him some time before his death.

The decease of him, from whose friendship I had obtained many opportunities of amusement, and to whom I turned my thoughts as to a refuge from misfortunes, has left me heavy. But my business is with myself.

September 18.

My first knowledge of Thrale was in 1765. I enjoyed his favour for almost a fourth part of my life.

[The following Prayer was composed and used by Doctor Johnson previous to his receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, on Sunday, December 5, 1784.]

Almighty and most merciful Father, I am now, as to human eyes it seems, about to commemorate, for the last time,* the death

*He died the 13th following.

of thy Son Jesus Christ our Saviour and Redeemer. Grant, O Lord, that my whole hope and confidence may be in his merits, and thy mercy; enforce and accept my imperfect repentance; make this commemoration available to the confirmation of my faith, the establishment of my hope, and the enlargement of my charity; and make the death of thy Son Jesus Christ effectual to my redemption. Have mercy upon me, and pardon the multitude of my offences. Bless my friends; have mercy upon all men. Support me, by thy Holy Spirit, in the days of weakness, and at the hour of death; and receive me, at my death, to everlasting happiness, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Ejaculation—Imploring Diligence.

O God, make me to remember that *the night cometh when no man can work.*

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